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Land policy REVIEW

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THE FARM LABOR PROBLEM:

Its Size and Shape

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS



Editorial Notes

The job that transcends all others is winning the war. Manpower is one of the important fronts on which the war will be won. That is the theme behind this special issue of *LAND POLICY REVIEW*. Many different points of view are presented, but the issue does not pretend to a complete coverage of the subject. It will have achieved its purpose if the thinking revealed in these pages helps to muster the manpower needed to grow the greatest quantities of food in American history.

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Farm Labor Policies TO HELP US WIN

By RAYMOND C. SMITH. *By way of introduction to this issue, it is stated that our farm labor policy must be directed toward one end—fullest possible use of the time of every available worker in the drive to produce food and fiber for victory.*



CALLED ON for record production at a time when it is losing farm workers by the thousands to war industries and armed forces, American agriculture faces difficulties in many areas in assuring a farm labor supply adequate for basic war requirements. Furthermore, expected new drafts upon farm manpower, for both military and industrial duty, promise a sharpening of these problems in the future.

Plentiful labor, in the pre-war sense, cannot be anticipated for farm work during the war. That is certain. It seems quite likely that agriculture will lose more than one million additional workers before the end of 1943. Finding replacements for these workers will not be an easy task. However, there is much that farmers themselves can do in their own communities to prevent

or resolve critical labor shortages. But vigorous public action will also be required in the farm labor field if agriculture is to meet wartime production needs.

Farmers are looking to the Department of Agriculture for leadership in this situation. The Department, in cooperation with the War Manpower Commission, the United States Employment Service, the Selective Service System, defense training agencies, and other agencies must adopt the proper policies and take necessary action to assist both farmer employers and farm laborers in overcoming the difficulties which confront them. Since the Department has had less experience in dealing with farm labor problems than with most other agricultural problems, its policies and programs are still more or less in the formative stage. This article presents cer-

tain suggestions for dealing with the farm labor supply problem, for consideration as the Department's policies are being clarified and its farm labor programs taking definite form.

Department policies with relation to farm labor supply must be guided by consideration of total national manpower requirements. Due to the great increase in manpower needs of the armed forces and industrial and agricultural production, there must be apportionment of available manpower between various types of essential employment. The total demand for labor, in all branches of the war effort, makes it necessary that fullest and most efficient use be made of the time of every worker, agricultural and non-agricultural.

Agricultural needs for manpower, now and until the war ends, depend upon the amounts and types of production the war demands of agriculture. At present, these demands are very heavy, and seem likely to continue heavy throughout the war. In any event, it is apparent that essential agricultural production will have to be obtained without waste of manpower, with a minimum number of persons employed in agriculture, either as farm operators or laborers.

Manpower of the types used extensively in agriculture during peacetime already has been drawn upon heavily by the armed forces and still more heavily by war industries. Agriculture already has expanded its use of women workers, children, and elderly men to fill the gap. Should it become apparent that the young men still remaining in agriculture could give greater help in the war effort by going into the armed forces for war industries, agriculture would

willingly make them available. This willingness would be conditioned, of course, by the extent to which the remaining workers plus available workers not usually employed as farm labor would enable agriculture to achieve basic production goals.

Taking into consideration, then, the total national needs for manpower, the Department should do everything possible to (1) keep fully informed about labor conditions and problems and pass this information on to farmers and farm laborers; (2) assist farmers in obtaining labor for essential production; (3) assure fair wages, good working conditions, and adequate housing to farm workers; (4) see that the existing supply of farm labor is used economically and efficiently and that workers not usually in the farm labor market are used whenever feasible; and (5) arrange for best possible distribution of farm workers in relation to need for their services, including possible assistance with transportation, housing, and other problems, as well as allocation of production goals on the basis, insofar as feasible, of availability of labor.

Assistance

More specifically, through a vigorous educational program and other means, the Department should encourage and assist farmers to (1) manage their farms so as to reduce labor needs to a minimum, as by staggering planting dates and developing combination crop-livestock enterprises that will reduce and spread out peak labor requirements; (2) use family labor as fully as possible before hiring workers; (3) hire smallest possible number of work-

ers, and give them fullest possible employment; (4) cooperate with neighbors to keep fully employed the labor in the community, and to make this labor available to other communities whenever it otherwise would be idle or doing nonessential work; (5) fully employ laborers in the community without discrimination, under fair wages and working conditions, before trying to hire migratory seasonal workers or full-time laborers from other places. Laborers in the community would include workers not usually hired, such as women, children, and older men; (6) seek importation of foreign workers only after native workers are fully employed, and then use them in such a way as not to lower standards of labor and working conditions; (7) make work on farms more attractive by paying the highest wages that would be fair both to workers and employers; (8) improve housing and sanitation where needed, and improve working conditions insofar as possible; (9) finance necessary transportation of migratory workers inasmuch as is possible; (10) make fullest use of the Farm Placement Service of the U. S. Employment Service in obtaining workers.

Within the limits of its authority and funds, the Department should (1) encourage payment of fair wages and discourage bargain wage rates below 30 cents per hour; (2) inform farmers, farm workers, and the public as to standards of wages and working conditions that it believes are fair both to employers and workers; (3) provide farm labor camps and other types of housing in areas where shortage of housing prevents farmers from obtaining sufficient labor; (4) in cooperation with em-

ployers, furnish transportation to farm workers, including under-employed operators who may wish to work on other farms; (5) make loans and grants under certain conditions, for subsistence and medical care, to workers and under-employed operators who may become available for work on other farms; (6) encourage under-employed farm operators whose production is low and outlook for increasing production on their own farms is poor, to accept work on other farms or in war industries, if by so doing they can help the war effort more than by staying on their present farms; (7) through loans and supervision, encourage fullest use of the time of under-employed farm operators in increasing their production, other factors permitting. Fuller employment of these farmers on their own farms would diminish the number of additional workers which otherwise would be required on other farms; (8) recognize, in establishing area production goals in the Food for Freedom drive, the variations between areas in availability of farm labor. Variations do exist, and their recognition in terms of area production goals would not only reduce the total number of workers needed for agricultural production in the Nation but also would minimize the need for moving workers from one area to another; (9) furnish housing, transportation, and other special services to immigrant workers brought into the country to work on farms; (10) in areas where the Farm Placement Service cannot maintain offices for recruiting and placing farm laborers, authorize field personnel of the Department to serve as part-time local representatives of the U. S. Employment Service.

If the war continues for several years, and if the farm labor situation continues to tighten, the Department may find that these measures alone are not adequate. In that event the Department may have to take additional steps to assist farmers in obtaining and holding needed workers. These steps may require new authorizations. With this possibility in view the Department should be considering the outlines of needed

authorizations. The Department through administration of the Sugar Act, which makes compliance with standards of wages and working conditions a prerequisite for benefit payments, has gained experience that suggests one of the possible approaches to future action. It might be worth while to explore now the feasibility of applying similar labor provisions in connection with other forms of assistance rendered to farmers by the Department.

Dependence

There is but one person whose welfare is as vital to the welfare of the whole country as is that of the wage worker who does manual labor, and that is the tiller of the soil—the farmer. If there is one lesson taught by history it is that the permanent greatness of any State must ultimately depend more upon the character of its country population than upon anything else. No growth of cities, no growth of wealth, can make up for a loss in either the number or the character of the farming population. In the United States more than in almost any other country we should realize this and should prize our country population. When this Nation began its independent existence it was as a nation of farmers. The towns were small and were for the most part mere sea-coast trading and fishing ports. The chief industry of the country was agriculture and the ordinary citizen was in some way connected with it. In every great crisis of the past a peculiar dependence has had to be placed upon the farming population; and this dependence has hitherto been justified. But it cannot be justified in the future if agriculture is permitted to sink in the scale as compared with other employments.

—THEODORE ROOSEVELT

How Many Workers DO WE NEED?

By M. R. COOPER. *Farm labor requirements to meet wartime production goals are viewed here by geographic distribution.*



MUCH TALK has gone the rounds in recent months about how much farm labor we have and how much we need. Crippling shortages are forecast for some sections this very season. Adequate supplies are predicted for other areas. Wasted manpower in areas of production where low-income farmers are concentrated is mentioned in connection with recruitment.

Differences in estimates of the number of workers needed in agriculture vary by as much as 20 percent; of the number needed for doing a specific job, by as much as 100 percent.

Estimates of total workers needed are sometimes based on labor requirements at the beginning or end of the year, without due regard to the additional number needed during the busy months, May through October. Carefully worked out computations are presented with definite implications that small farm units, wherever they are, can be combined economically to give fuller employment to a predetermined proportion of all farm families. Small farm operators are accused of wasting their time, even though it is known that many of them actually make most of their cash living ex-

penses by working in industry, or for someone else part time.

One reason for confusion in considering farm labor requirements is the inadequacy of the basic data with which all students of farm labor problems must work. When it comes to calculating the number of agricultural workers needed in any one place at any one time, we are at a loss for reliable figures from the start. Farm employment statistics include any person 10 years old or older who worked 2 or more days during the last week in each month. Even these data are not available for critical areas, or as county or State totals.

Probably at least 75 percent of all farm work is done by the farm operator and unpaid family workers; only a little more than one-third of the farmers hire any labor at all; many of these do not pay more than \$100 in wages throughout the entire year. The ability of various groups to produce farm products for war needs with available labor supplies is simply not known.

Until agricultural statistics are available for well-defined groups of farmers and for different classes of workers, rather than in terms of averages or totals for States or regions, we cannot know the true meaning

of various local claims as to labor needs, shortages, wastes, and surpluses. It is of necessity, therefore, that this discussion is general in character, and confined largely to State and regional requirements.

One thing is fairly sure: that large increases in agricultural production will be accomplished only by greater effort. Wishful thinking alone will not grow, harvest, and put into storage increasingly large supplies of agricultural products.

Extra Hours

Increased production called for in the January 1942 production goals will require 143 million more 10-hour days of work than were required by agriculture in 1941. If the same percentage increase in number of workers were needed to do the job, the labor force of 1941 would have to be increased this year by an average of more than 700,000 workers each month. But farm families and regular hired workers can and will do much of the additional days of work. They will work harder, keep longer hours, and if necessary postpone some maintenance jobs indefinitely.

Past experience shows generally that as farm work increases seasonally, farm operators and various members of the family who have not been fully employed usually do about one-half to two-thirds of the extra work, depending on the type of farming and the seasonal labor load. They hire, on the average, during the months of field work, only about one worker for each 300 to 500 hours of additional work to be done. Conversely, as the work load decreases during the late summer and fall,

one worker is released for each 300 to 500 hours less work to be done.

Conclusion: A 7 percent increase in the number of days of work to be done in 1942 would require an increase of 2.5 to 3.5 percent in the number of workers, providing that farm workers in 1941 were fully employed. These figures apply to agriculture in general, and not to individual producers, nor to specialized producing groups which must depend almost entirely on seasonal hired workers for critical jobs.

Data available for 1941 and for the first half of 1942 show that, in general, there were surpluses of farm labor in most States in some of the winter months. These surpluses largely consisted of family workers, many of them boys and girls who were in local schools most of the time during these months. During the summer and fall months when farm activity was at a high level, there appear to have been small surpluses of workers on farms in several States. Slight adjustments downward from the number of workers on farms in these States in 1941 can be made, and to these adjusted figures for 1941 can be added the additional number of workers needed in 1942.

The final estimates indicate that the number of workers needed in 1942 is slightly less than the number on farms in 1941 in several States—principally in the South Atlantic, East South Central, and West South Central groups. Even in these States, however, seasonal labor shortages may occur in some areas. In fact, one of the pressing farm labor problems in many areas is that of finding sufficient work for full employment in the dull seasons and sufficient workers in the busy seasons.

The average number of workers needed per month throughout 1942 is estimated for the entire country at about 1 percent more than the number on farms in 1941. During the 5 growing and harvesting months, June through October, the total number needed in 1942 will be about 1.5 percent larger than the number in 1941. The accompanying tables break down by regions the number of 10-hour days of farm work required in 1941 and 1942, as well as the average number of farm workers needed per month during both years.

Test

Although there will be some tight spots in labor supplies during the 1942 harvesting season, the real test of agriculture's ability to organize its labor force for full production will come in 1943 and each subsequent war year.

Farmers with a given labor supply probably cannot be expected to lengthen the working day sufficiently to take care of as large a proportion of increased agricultural production as they will in 1942. Somewhere along the line, the family's ability to increase its labor output will be reached, especially during the busy months. There will be less equipment, fewer young men on the farms, more old agricultural workers, and a larger proportion of inexperienced workers.

Difficult labor problems will pile up in areas near industrial centers where wages are high, as well as in areas where sharp seasonal labor peaks are met by seasonal workers. Wherever the labor force is composed primarily of family workers and regular hired men, it is usual to

find a diversified type of agriculture that lends itself to the spreading out, to some extent, of several farm jobs, and also to mechanization. But in commercial fruit and vegetable areas where critical jobs must be done on time, largely by nonresident workers, the outlook is cloudier.

Cooperative organizations will help considerably to achieve full use of labor and machinery. One man with a four-horse team can do as much work as two men with two two-horse teams. Women, children, and inexperienced workers must be matched to the jobs to be done. Human effort can be most effectively used by meshing it with the farm machines and power units available.

For the most part, labor problems will be local and seasonal in character, and must be solved very largely by community effort. It may become necessary to inventory and appraise our labor force in each farming area. We may even need to use, for the critical periods, labor from industries not needed for war production.

Family

On the average, three-fourths of all farm workers are family workers and one-fourth are hired workers. Undoubtedly, a large percentage of the hired workers are from farm communities and many of them live on farms. On April 1, 1942, 14 percent of all farm workers in the United States were female, and in some States the percentage was as large as 20 to 24 percent. From 2 to 5 percent of the total workers on April 1, 1942, were under 14 years of age; in 2 States 10 percent of the total were less than 14 years old. One-third of the farm operators on April 1, 1940, were more than 54 years of age, and

one-seventh were more than 64 years old.

Great responsibility toward the winning of the war rests with farm families. To what extent family farm workers—composed as they are of the present percentages of women, children under 14 years of age, and old men—can continue to absorb additional farm work is anyone's guess. Reports of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics show that early in May 1942 farm operators were working an average of 12 hours per day. In one State the average was 13.6 hours.

If necessary, farm people will do more than will be required of them in 1942. They will work harder, work longer hours, and many family workers who have had to work only a few days a week will do more. Not a few field supervisors

will find it necessary to do the work of a field hand. Jobs ordinarily done in a well regulated farm business will go undone, or at best be only partly done.

The labor requirements shown in the accompanying tables are based on the average performance of farm workers. The estimates, therefore, reflect what can reasonably be expected if the labor force is of fairly good quality and if each worker is rather fully employed. Many farm operators and other family workers become skillful at a large number of farm jobs. They do without waste of time, or breakage and waste of materials, scores of separate tasks in the course of a year that cannot readily be done by beginners. Regular hired workers often become adroit, too, in doing such jobs on a farm. And practice makes seasonal

Average number of farm workers needed per month in 1941 and 1942, by geographic divisions

Geographic division	Average number of agricultural workers (12-month average)		Change from 1941 to 1942	Average number of agricultural workers (5-month average) ¹		Change from 1941 to 1942
	1941	1942 ²		1941	1942 ²	
	<i>Thousands</i>	<i>Thousands</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Thousands</i>	<i>Thousands</i>	<i>Percent</i>
New England.....	247	254	+2.8	277	287	+3.6
Middle Atlantic.....	620	632	+1.9	713	730	+2.4
East North Central....	1,420	1,465	+3.2	1,522	1,580	+3.8
West North Central....	1,650	1,680	+1.8	1,810	1,857	+2.6
South Atlantic.....	1,931	1,957	+1.3	2,169	2,200	+1.4
East South Central....	1,685	1,656	-1.7	1,874	1,848	-1.4
West South Central....	1,798	1,785	-0.7	2,009	2,005	-0.2
Mountain.....	439	452	+3.0	505	520	+3.0
Pacific.....	564	568	+0.7	658	673	+2.3
U. S. total.....	10,354	10,449	+0.9	11,537	11,700	+1.4

¹ June, July, August, September, and October average.

² Based on production called for in January production goals.

Estimated number of 10-hour days of farm work required in 1941 and 1942, by geographic divisions

Geographic division	Estimated number days of farm work		Percentage increase, 1942 over 1941
	1941	1942 ¹	
	<i>Thousands</i>	<i>Thousands</i>	<i>Percent</i>
New England	37,576	40,391	7.5
Middle Atlantic	125,229	131,375	4.9
East North Central	339,685	367,608	8.2
West North Central	419,238	447,663	6.8
South Atlantic	326,218	346,397	6.2
East South Central	263,120	282,600	7.4
West South Central	335,991	362,612	7.9
Mountain	101,149	105,149	4.0
Pacific	126,826	134,006	5.7
U. S. total	2,075,032	2,217,801	6.9

¹ Number of 10-hour days if January agricultural production goals for 1942 are attained.

workers proficient at the specific jobs they do.

Some evidence of a decrease in the ranks of skilled farm workers is already at hand. As the needs of war and industry increase, farmers probably will be compelled to get along with relatively less competent help—both in terms of skill and of physical endurance. There is some evidence, also, that a relatively large percentage of all agricultural workers in 1942 is made up of women and youths, some of whom have not had much farm experience. If labor shortages become more pronounced, the composition of the farm labor force will change, and tend to become less efficient. It will require more workers to do the job that is facing agriculture.

Experienced operators and managers will be needed in the years ahead to guide the less experienced workers. Frequently only a few

days' direction on a specific job, even in the handling of machines, will suffice for those who want to learn. Many years will be required, however, for most to become proficient in the hundred and one farm jobs that require the attention of the farm operator or supervisor.

American farmers are the fortunate possessors of the greatest aggregation of farm machines and power ever assembled in any country at any time. The combined number of farm tractors, motortrucks, and automobiles, totaling 7 million units, will have to travel 20 billion miles in producing, harvesting, and storing the aggregate 1942 farm production. Full and proper use of these power units, and of the complementary machines, in the hands of skilled operators is needed for the most effective use of labor.

If farm labor supplies become so short that our minimum food needs

are threatened, hours of work which now seem long may seem short. Workers that seem only fair today may seem good. Machines that now seem antiquated may become priceless. The job to be done is all that matters, and that job is maximum production with whatever manpower and machines can be allotted to the food front.

What Price Calories?

If the farm labor situation really gets tight, therefore, it may be necessary to reduce, or omit entirely, specified food items that require much labor and yet produce little food value. Aside from the important question of vitamins, there is wide variation in the food values obtained from an hour of labor used in producing various commodities.

One hour of labor spent by the American farmer on pork production, for example, will return from 4 to 16 times as many calories as an hour spent on poultry and eggs, milk, lamb, or beef. Wheat and barley return 200 percent more calories for each hour of work than does pork, and rice and field corn each return considerably more calories than pork for the effort expended. The calory return for every hour of labor spent in producing dry edible beans, white and sweet potatoes, cabbage, and tree fruits is lower than for pork, but is relatively high compared with carrots, spinach, raspberries, and lettuce.

Number

The number of calories derived from each hour of labor spent in producing specified food items has been computed as follows:

	Number of calories per hour of labor	Percent- age of number of calo- ries in pork
Barley	172,000	339
Wheat	150,000	297
Rice	98,000	193
Corn	81,000	160
Buckwheat	56,000	110
Pork	51,000	100
Dry beans	46,000	91
Potatoes, white	28,000	56
Pears	22,000	43
Potatoes, sweet	22,000	43
Lamb	14,000	27
Peaches	13,000	25
Onions	11,000	22
Beef	11,000	22
Cabbage	10,000	20
Apples	10,000	20
Milk	10,000	20
Strawberries	9,000	18
Peas, green	6,000	12
Celery	5,000	10
Tomatoes	5,000	10
String beans	5,000	10
Carrots	4,000	8
Chickens and eggs	3,000	6
Spinach	2,000	4
Raspberries	1,000	2
Lettuce	1,000	2
Blackberries	1,000	2

These figures are based on average nation-wide yields and labor requirements in the production of the food items specified. In some cases, additional products are produced with the labor used, such as straw with wheat and barley, stover with corn, and wool with lamb. The estimates do not include labor for bringing orchards to bearing age.

To consider which products to reduce and which to increase, we must also consider the question of vitamins and other dietary needs. The examples presented are intended to show that, with a given amount of labor, we can produce more food value in some cereals, some vegetables, some fruits, and some animal products than in others of the same

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class. This may become very important as the war progresses, depending on the seriousness of labor shortages.

The time is not here now, but it may not be far away when we will have to forego mass production as usual of crops that make heavy demands upon labor, in order to produce increasingly large supplies of critical war foods. Labor supplies and transportation facilities may dictate sacrifices. We must be prepared to take the best course.

Distribution

The kinds of farm work a man does from day to day or the amount of work he does in the field in a week is often influenced by weather conditions. Unusual drought, rainfall, or temperature may cause peak harvest seasons to vary by as much as three to four weeks from year to year. For these reasons, labor needs for some jobs cannot always be gauged accurately far in advance.

Some areas will undoubtedly be hit harder than others. Undoubtedly, too, there will continue to be areas in which labor supplies are relatively plentiful and nonproductive, largely because of low-grade physical resources. The war years ahead will be the time to see that these human resources are distributed better, to the mutual advantage of both agriculture and industry.

Obviously, a shortage of farm labor in an area where little more than enough is grown to support the farmers and their families, will not cut into lend-lease supplies as much as if the shortage were in an area where each worker produces enough food for 50 or 100 families.

Iowa farmers, for example, use only 45 hours of labor to produce 100 bushels of corn, whereas Georgia farmers use 350 hours or eight times as much. One hundred bushels of oats in Iowa take only 23 hours of labor; in Kansas, 30; in New York, 55; and in the Southeastern States, close to 100 hours. Wheat requires 33 hours per 100 bushels in Washington, 40 in Kansas and Texas, 60 in Iowa, 80 in North Dakota, and from 100 to 200 hours in some of the Southeastern States. Area variations are less, but still considerable, for crops that are not so widely grown as are the grain crops—crops that are restricted commercially to specialized areas of production.

The examples are used merely to illustrate production possibilities with a labor force so limited in size that all of our present lands could not be cared for adequately. They show the possibilities of determining in advance in what areas maximum food and feed supplies can be obtained with a limited labor supply.

Not to Suggest

That is not to suggest that farmers in the areas with high labor requirements for a given product may have to stop farming, or even that they may have to stop producing a given crop. The point is that if the time comes when there is not enough labor to go around, area adjustments in the labor force may be necessary. In areas of poor land where farmers grow a little corn, a little small grain, a little hay, and a home garden or truck patch, many workers not employed off the farm in war jobs will be needed much more in areas where better opportunities to produce for victory prevail.

A Year on the Farm Labor Front

By VARDEN FULLER. *A review of the experiences of the recent past, which affords many clues to desirable programs and policies for 1943.*



AS OF Pearl Harbor, according to the pooled judgments of farmers acting as crop reporters for the U. S. Department of Agriculture, the national farm labor supply had been reduced to 64 percent of "normal." Last April these same farmers judged that the farm labor supply had been further reduced to 61 percent of "normal." But during these months, the reporters indicated that employment continued at approximately the same level as in 1939, when the supply of labor was thought to be 90 percent of "normal."

Thus one group of farmers believed the farm labor supply had fallen far below "normal" during a period when employment was almost constant. The same thing can probably be said of farmers in general. What, then, is the significance of the farmers' concept of a "normal" labor supply?

The answer apparently is that the great mass of agricultural employers has grown used to a situation in which an ample reserve made it comparatively easy to procure and retain workers. As a result, farm employers are inclined to appraise the farm labor situation in terms of the

reserve of labor, rather than in terms of workers actually employed or absolutely needed. As a further result, alleged labor shortages can appear long before there is any slump in employment or shrinkage in output.

That is one outstanding fact which has emerged from our experience on the farm labor front during the months leading up to and immediately following December 7.

Now that spring work on the farm is complete and early harvests are under way, we can see what actually has happened. Reports have been all too current that crops were being lost and curtailed due to labor shortages. Undoubtedly there have been many inconveniences, as well as considerable adjustment in work schedules.

But recent reports direct from representative farmers indicate that in most areas more labor was hired this year than last. At least half of all farmers obtained all the labor they wanted. The rest accomplished their tasks by such means as extending the work over a longer period, working harder themselves, and relying more and more upon members of their families.

Dairy farmers and small general farmers have been hard hit because the type of worker they employ is frequently eligible for military service or qualified for work off the farm. This is somewhat less true of the large number of workers following seasonal hand labor. Yet the small operator has usually adapted himself much more thoroughly and considerably more quietly to the wartime labor market than has the large seasonal employer. Longer hours, exchanging labor with his neighbors, employing substitute workers, increased wage rates and perquisites—these are some of the means by which the smaller operator has made the adjustment.

Safe Guess

Despite continued reported shortages of dairy hands—particularly from the Northeast and Midwest—direct investigations at dairy farms indicate that adjustments are being made which will enable milk production to continue expanding. Occasionally dairy herds are auctioned allegedly because of labor shortage. But there is no evidence that cows are being retired from milk production any faster than might be expected from the prevailing relative prices of feed, butterfat, and beef, as well as from the normal rate of depreciation.

On the whole and with minor exceptions, the 1941-42 farm labor "shortages" which we have heard so much about last year were shortages of labor reserves, rather than of workers actually needed.

Because boys, women, and older workers have partially replaced men, the average worker's productivity has undoubtedly fallen. This is

probably fully offset, however, by the fact that workers are now employed more days than they used to be. It is a pretty safe guess that we are still getting the same yearly output of farm work for each person employed.

Hurdles

The labor structure developed in many areas during the 10 years prior to 1941 was one demanding large numbers of workers on call for short-term employment. Other characteristics of the labor structure were wage rates too low to compete with jobs off the farm (when they existed), poor housing, and few if any other perquisites. All these stand today as obstacles to a rationalized farm labor program for wartime, when jobs off the farm are more plentiful.

Besides, many crop operations did not depend exclusively upon the national labor market even before the last decade. Sugar beets, southwestern cotton, southwestern and Pacific coast truck and fruit crops, for example, have never been produced under conditions requiring the recruitment of seasonal hand workers from a fully employed domestic labor market. There has always been some relief to the pressure of labor scarcity through access to external labor markets.

Still another hurdle is that many large-scale employers have become used to experienced workers from a specific racial or ethnic group. California asparagus growers believe that only Filipinos or Japanese can cut asparagus properly. White American workers are not supposed to be adaptable to the sugar-beet work of California and Colorado—although they do practically all of this work

on the family farms of Utah and Idaho. Southern New Mexico cotton growers not only insist upon Mexican workers, but also demand that these workers come from Old Mexico rather than northern New Mexico.

Thinking that the Government would "do something" about farm labor, farm employers have delayed in making the needed adjustments to the wartime labor supply that the aircraft plants, say, made long ago. Farm employers have been loathe to accept inexperienced workers, or to provide them with instruction and friendly supervision while they were learning. Derogatory charges have much too often been leveled at youthful workers—their output, work habits, and living requirements.

Evidence is at hand that such adjustments to wartime labor conditions have often been delayed because farmers expected labor to be brought in from the outside. And in this expectation, they have had the succor of at least a passive governmental attitude.

Last Year

In general last year, none seriously contended that a national shortage of farm labor existed. But two lines of adjustment were considered essential to an improved farm labor situation: (1) Many farm workers were believed to be taking refuge on the rolls of public assistance agencies; and (2) available labor supplies were not effectively placed in the areas where they were most needed.

Early in 1941, farmers took action along these two lines.

For one thing, they began to crack down on WPA and other public

agencies. A matter of incidental interest is that they did so on a scale appropriate to a much larger reserve of labor than actually was available from this source. And often they did not stop until long after the reserve was pretty well exhausted.

Further, labor committees and growers' groups undertook surveys of labor requirements and supplies that almost invariably resulted in heavily inflated estimates of the number of workers required. Such surveys often consisted of adding together the numbers of workers that every farmer would need, without allowing for a worker to be employed on more than one farm. Then, too, farmers were usually very liberal in estimating the number of workers needed.

This tendency toward overestimation caused the Employment Service in one State to draw a distinction between *labor demand* (the number of workers asked for) and *labor requirement* (the number needed to accomplish the task). In another State, the Employment Service adopted the policy of discounting orders by 40 percent.

These surveys also failed to get an accurate estimate of the number of workers available locally, which could be set off against estimated requirements in order to calculate the additional workers needed. In short, there was seldom, if ever, a reliable net figure on extra laborers needed on the basis of which the Employment Service could plan a program for recruitment and placement of workers. Some surveys were abandoned before the results were even tabulated.

As its contribution toward a rationalized distribution of labor, the Employment Service announced ma-

chinery for inter-area and inter-State clearance of workers. In some instances—the movement of berry pickers from California to Oregon, to name one—these inter-State arrangements moved with smoothness and efficiency. But generally two severe barriers existed: (1) the difficulty of obtaining orders for a definite number of workers from employers in the areas where alleged shortages existed; and (2) the tendency on the part of some State units of the Employment Service to think in terms of State needs, rather than in terms of a national point of view.

There were at least two exceptions to the general impression prevalent in 1941 that the Nation had an adequate supply of farm labor: certain growers in Texas and Arizona demanded recourse to Mexican workers; and Aroostook, Maine, potato growers demanded the privilege of bringing in Canadians. Neither of these requests was granted, nor were there unusual agricultural losses due to shortage of labor. A brief chronology of the season's developments in one of these areas of alleged shortage may be of interest.

Example

Let us take the Salt River Valley cotton area of Arizona.

To harvest cotton on the large-scale farms of the Salt River Valley requires some 10,000 to 20,000 out-of-State workers, who make up between two-thirds and three-fourths of all cotton pickers employed. In recent years, westward migrants from the South Plains have stopped over for the cotton season and then proceeded on their course. Some migratory workers on their regular seasonal routes have come in both

from the East and the West. Other sources of labor have included Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Indians. But the point is this: There has never been enough labor in Arizona in August or September to meet the peak cotton-picking requirements from October to December.

In July 1941, groups of cotton growers became apprehensive because they thought the usual sources of labor could not be depended upon. Claiming there was no other source of labor, they demanded removal of restrictions on importing Mexican nationals. This request was denied after considerable investigation. As an alternative, the Employment Service undertook a more vigorous inter-State recruitment program.

Despite some uneasiness during October and the first half of November, it appears that the rate of cotton harvest was never restricted by limitation of labor supply. As the picking season approached the peak in mid-November, an adequate labor supply was officially recognized. At this point, the number of workers employed appears to have been approximately two-thirds of the number originally called for during the previous July to meet the peak requirements.

By early December notices such as the following began to crop up: ". . . there appears to be ample labor to complete harvesting the cotton crop. Further migration for this purpose should be discouraged." Less than 2 weeks later, the burden of excess workers became clear from the fact that "representatives of the U. S. Employment Service, Farm Security Administration, and Bureau of Agricultural Economics were requested to again contact their States to the East and to the

West for the purpose of endeavoring to discourage further inflow of agricultural workers to Arizona." Although this was about 3 weeks after the peak season, the cotton harvest usually continues for another 2½ months.

Beginning about the first of January, the big problem in the Salt River Valley was unemployment relief.

Salt River Valley illustrates the apprehension which descends upon such areas when the general employment situation begins to look up. The same process got under way in Arizona again this year, but earlier and more vigorously. With the new restrictions upon transportation, there is obviously more cause for alarm. But evidence is ample and conclusive that a large reserve of surplus labor still exists in the South Plains States; that in one way or another, a high degree of mobility is somehow maintained; and that general westward migration is only slightly diminished from the high level of 1941.

Committees

In response to Secretary Wickard's recommendation in March 1941, nearly all the States and approximately half the counties in the Nation organized Farm Labor Committees.

Part and parcel of the agricultural planning structure, these committees endeavored to draw officials of public agencies together with farmers and workers into a coordinated attack on local farm labor problems. Like many other groups of farmers, the committees drew upon WPA reserves and measured farm labor requirements. They also

studied the placement facilities of the Employment Service; considered the need and desirability of adjusting school dates; looked into other means of securing the services of pupils, townspeople, and others who do not usually work in agriculture.

Probably their most significant accomplishment was educational. From these discussions and activities, farmers got a better perspective on the programs of service agencies; service agency personnel, a better understanding of the farmers' labor problems.

Undoubtedly the committees' most serious fault on the action front was the underlying assumption that their job was to determine the local situation, pass appropriate resolutions indicating their ideas of alleviation, and then wait for someone else to do something for them. Despite Secretary Wickard's stress upon the need for local planning and action, there was not enough accomplished along lines which local people themselves could undertake.

A further hitch was confusion as to responsibilities. With so many official, quasi-official and unofficial agencies and groups all announcing that they were taking some part in the farm labor field, it is not surprising that the ordinary farmer should have become bewildered. He might well assume there was little need, if indeed opportunity, for him to do much except wait while things were done for him.

School officials, chambers of commerce, and civic organizations undertook spirited activities to impress upon pupils, townspeople, and others their patriotic responsibility to help save the crops. But unfortunately, on far too many occasions,

those who answered such appeals were disappointed to find no transportation, no housing, no one to direct them to jobs or to teach them how to do the job—sometimes, indeed, no jobs. Such potential workers will be harder to enlist if a real shortage does occur.

On Their Own

Although there is reason to believe that a complete accounting of experiences in the field of farm labor during 1941-42 might end with the scales weighed heavily on the side of official and quasi-official mistakes, the only reason for such an accounting is to improve our conduct in the future.

From the past year and a half of defense and wartime farm labor experience, therefore, perhaps the basic observation that should be taken into account in any plans for 1943 adds up to this: Public service agencies can help a great deal, but when it comes down to the final job, the average American farmer and farm worker is largely on his own.

Remember that about three-fourths of those engaged in agriculture are self-employed, while the one-fourth that is hired is generally employed in relatively small numbers on widely scattered farms. Since the bulk of agricultural manpower goes to work with no employment contract at all or with only a very informal one, there is little in the way of a hub from which agency service can be administered.

On the many aspects of agriculture's wartime responsibility that are beyond the purview of the individ-

ual farmer and worker, public service can make valuable contributions. Educational programs are in order on the conservation of labor and adaptation to unusual workers. State and County War Boards, together with the Agricultural Extension Service, should accept leadership on this front.

Although manpower available for agriculture may be no more scarce in 1943 than in the last year and a half, the probabilities point to a tighter situation. These prospects without doubt warrant our making comprehensive plans for overcoming future shortages of labor. In order that misplaced or misused manpower will not obstruct full realization of Food for Freedom goals, the 1943 plans should provide for a coordinated program along lines of action appropriate for individual growers, local communities, and the Nation as a whole. Such plans are developed in detail elsewhere in this issue.

By way of a final word of warning, agencies should review unusual demands made upon them in the light of two considerations.

First, a tendency to ascribe too many difficulties exclusively to farm labor shortages has developed. Weather, disease, pests, markets and prices, and processing capacity are all factors which may upset agricultural expectations. It may be wise to ascertain that all of these factors are in proper order before taking action on alleged labor shortage.

Second, wartime offers an opportunity to make, in the name of the emergency, demands which are more accurately directed towards the preservation or enlargement of self-interest.

FARM MANPOWER

AND *Production*

By FRED S. WALLACE. *"Only by the greatest effort and most complete cooperation of all agencies and individuals can the Battle of Farm Labor be won."*



THE JOB our farmers have undertaken in 1942 defies comprehension. If you have much trouble translating the huge production goals into concrete terms, try to get these pictures before your mind's eye:

A sea of milk big enough to float every battleship, aircraft carrier, cruiser, destroyer, and submarine in the United States Navy.

A 7-lane highway stretching from New York to San Francisco paved an inch thick with meat.

A double line of eggs reaching from the earth to the moon.

A row of cases of canned fruit bridging the Atlantic between New York and Liverpool.

A double row of cases of canned vegetables stretching across the Pacific from Los Angeles to Vladivostock.

Not even these pictures represent the quantity of farm production expected under 1942 goals. They represent merely *increases* called for by the goals over the 1935-39 average production of these commodities.

To get these increases in milk, fruits, and vegetables alone, to say nothing of other products, would normally require an addition to the farm labor force of hundreds of

thousands of workers. Actually, farmers must get along this year with a labor force little if any larger in numbers and much less experienced than the labor force of last year. This situation has precipitated what might well be called the Battle of Farm Labor.

If we can keep labor shortages from sabotaging production, if we can keep fruit from rotting on the bushes and trees, if we can get sufficient labor to plow, plant, and harvest according to our goals, then and only then shall we have won the Battle of Farm Labor. It is not over-emphatic to say that this is one of the *important* battles of the war.

There are three major drains on our reservoir of farm labor—industrial war jobs, voluntary enlistments, and Selective Service. This year a million or more persons will leave farms to enlist or to take jobs in war industries. It is conservatively estimated that Selective Service will draw off about 514,000 more farmers and farm workers. A total of at least a million and a half farmers and farm workers, therefore, may be expected to be lost to agriculture this year.

The result of this triple drain on farm labor has been very apparent

this year. For example: on May 1, 1942, farmers had 26,000 fewer hired hands than on May 1, 1941. By raising wages, scouring the countryside for available help, and hiring students and townspeople from the cities, farmers managed by June 1, 1942, to increase their total hired help to a point 24,000 above that of a year earlier.

But they needed hundreds of thousands more. The next thing to be done was to call on farm women and farm boys and girls. On June 1, 1942, there were 208,000 more family workers engaged in farm work than there had been a year before.

This situation was not without difficulties. The employed workers in 1942 include a much larger proportion of inexperienced help. There is some danger in this necessary use of inexperienced labor, especially in dairying where the mishandling of a cow can reduce her quantity of milk.

Here is the way women have come to the fore in farm work: On April 1, 1942, nearly 14 percent of all workers on surveyed farms were women. Two years earlier the percentage reported by the census of April 1, 1940 was only 5.8.

Farm women are working in the fields side by side with their husbands. They work hard and they work well. In the sugar beet regions they help in the back-breaking work of thinning. They set out tomato plants, pick strawberries, harvest stringbeans and asparagus. They drive tractors, plant, cultivate, and harvest. In some cases they have taken over the complete operation of farms.

Are they effective? Well, chickens and eggs have traditionally been

under the farm woman's jurisdiction. This year farmers have been asked to increase egg production 13 percent over last year. Late reports indicate that egg production is considerably above the goal.

Boys and girls too, both farm and city dwellers, are helping produce the food our side needs to win. Older boys are doing practically all the things hired hands are accustomed to handle: pitching hay, helping with the threshing, running the tractor, driving the team, going to market, taking care of the machinery. Younger boys and the girls feed the poultry, gather eggs, do the milking, look after fruit and vegetable gardens, pick berries, run errands, watch the smaller children, help with the dishes, assist in canning.

Heartening

It is heartening to watch the numerous organizations, in rural areas and in the cities, striving to provide the farm help that may mean a speedier defeat for the Axis and a more potent voice at the peace table for Uncle Sam.

Last spring, for example, thousands of vocational agricultural departments in the Nation's public schools intensified their work of helping students prepare for jobs on their home farms. Among these students were nearly 250,000 members of the Future Farmers of America, many of whom helped train city high school boys who wished to spend this summer in the Land Army.

Again, the Montgomery County, Maryland, Farm Labor Committee instituted a helpful program in early June. A hundred high school boys from the District of Columbia be-

gan a training period for a summer's work as farm hands. They pitched hay and dug fence post holes in the "hardening up" process. Upon completion of their training, they went to work on regular farm-day hours. During the summer the boys lived in various community high schools.

The Volunteer Land Corps, a privately sponsored and directed organization, has recruited boys of 16 and over, and girls of 18 and over, for farm work. The major activities of the Volunteer Land Corps are being directed this year to the Vermont and New Hampshire area where farmers need more help in producing milk, butter, and eggs. In other States, Boys' Working Reserve, Junior Victory Army, and other programs are in operation.

The Boy Scouts are doing a good turn in "hiring out" as resident laborers on farms throughout the country. Moreover, they have established camps to provide help for farmers during the harvest peak loads, thus taking over work usually handled in peace time by itinerant labor. The 4-H Club boys and girls, too, have done yeoman's work in the scrap collection drive.

Thanks to these reserve workers—youth, women, and the aged—we have solved most of the problems so far. The trend of farm employment in recent months gives hope that it may be possible to expand the supply of farm labor from these sources enough to offset to a very considerable extent the drains made by Selective Service, enlistments, and the war industry. It appears probable now that farm employment for the rest of 1942, may not be much less than it was during the same period of 1941.

Forefront

In the forefront of this drive to win the Battle of Farm Labor have been the U. S. Department of Agriculture War Boards. It is the general duty of the War Boards to see to it that farmers raise the food we need—and that any obstacle to that end shall be carefully and efficiently removed. But in a memorandum issued March 12, 1942, Secretary Wickard outlined a program giving the War Boards specific instructions with respect to farm labor.

This program called for action along the following lines:

1. Registration of (a) all unemployed or partially employed farm workers; (b) all operators of farm equipment who perform custom works; (c) all youth and women available for farm work; and (d) the labor requirements of all farmers.

2. Development of plans (a) for use of all qualified WPA and NYA workers; (b) for use of townspeople willing to help on farms during peak seasons; (c) for the transportation of workers to and from farms; (d) for training which may be necessary for farm work; (e) for the exchange between farmers of hired men, seasonal workers, and the labor of the farmers themselves and of their families; and (f) for provision of local centralized living facilities for migratory labor.

3. Each State War Board was directed to confer immediately with the State U. S. Employment Service director and with representatives of other interested governmental agencies to develop plans for mobilizing farm labor.

But although we have won a farm labor victory in 1942 under the guid-

ance of the War Boards, farmers in some sections of the country are running up against sharp crises. In such a highly industrial area as New England, for example, farmers have been hard pressed to stave off a decrease in production. War Board reports from Vermont indicate that some farmers are reducing herds to adjust to the labor shortage, while others are selling cows to take war jobs in industry. In Connecticut the greatest single threat to this year's production goals is scarcity of labor. And Mississippi reports an acute labor shortage, as do the Chicago, Kansas City and Pacific Northwest milk sheds.

The difficulty in some places stems from lack of transportation and housing facilities. At this writing, for example, many farm laborers in Southern California are said to be unemployed, while farmers in the San Joaquin Valley fear that some of their crops may be lost because of lack of help.

In other areas, hoarding of labor has prevented the most effective use of the available workers. Farmers sometimes keep workers longer than they actually need them, or they fail to share available workers with neighboring farmers.

As this is written, however, no serious crop losses appear thus far to have resulted from labor scarcity. The bulk of the strawberry, asparagus, and pea crops in New Jersey were harvested by June 1. The strawberry harvest in Maryland appears to have been finished without crop loss as resulting from a labor shortage. In Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois, farmers are getting along by working longer hours and utilizing women, high school boys and older men. In Wisconsin, farm-

ers have held hired labor requirements to a minimum by more efficient use of men and machines.

The Real Fight

But although we may manage to get through 1942 without any considerable loss in production due to labor scarcity, we must be prepared for an immeasurably harder struggle next year. The 1943 goals will be high. The shortage of machinery is sure to be more acute. Supplies and equipment of many kinds will be far scarcer and will create many more difficulties than we have experienced in 1942.

The real fight, however, is going to be the fight for adequate labor. More workers are needed in industry. In December 1941, there were about 19 million persons engaged in industrial war production. It is estimated that this number will rise to 24 million by December 1943. Naturally, part of this increase will come from the farms.

We are now talking about an armed force of some 8 or 10 millions. If we reach a goal of 10 million, we can bank on it that about 2¼ million of them will come off the farms. Selective Service, according to the very lowest estimate, will take another 400,000 workers off the farms next year.

There is a saying, "Never send a boy to do a man's work." But next year the farmers of the United States are going to have to depend very greatly on boys to do men's work—on boys and women and even girls. Farmers who work 12 and 14 hours a day now will have to work 14 and 16 hours a day in 1943.

Our best hope for 1943 lies in the effective use of all agencies which can help recruit farm labor and,

most of all, in individual action by farmers themselves.

According to a special survey of 20 States, conducted by representatives of the Agricultural Adjustment Agency, the U. S. Employment Service, and the Office for Agricultural War Relations, the work of the Employment Service in recruiting farm labor is excellent in many areas.

But in areas where the results are not satisfactory, something must be done at once. Whether the difficulty is due to lack of knowledge on the part of farmers, shortage of funds, failure of farm agencies and USES to cooperate, or some other cause, we must get at the root of it.

Agricultural agencies must support the Employment Service. Farmers must be informed as to its functions and all branches of the USDA must work more closely with USES in developing plans for transportation, housing, best use of workers, and similar programs which are tied in closely with recruitment and placement.

A great deal, too, depends on how the Selective Service system is applied to farm workers. Generally, Selective Service Boards appear to be giving due consideration to the needs of agriculture. The War Boards have furnished Selective Service Boards with lists of essential agricultural products. Farmers often hesitate to request deferment for their sons and hired help because they do not realize that food is a war weapon as truly as guns and tanks and planes. They should remember that Selective Service Boards are not mind-readers, but must decide each case on the evidence presented.

Not much can be looked for from WPA rolls. The number of per-

sons on WPA is down to around a half million. Moreover, most of those on the rolls at present are not qualified or acceptable for farm work because of age, physical handicaps, and lack of experience. Besides, farmers in general are unable to provide housing for families.

The Farm Security Administration migratory camp program, discussed elsewhere in this issue, has proved satisfactory and helpful in securing farm workers. These camps, scattered through many sections of the country, provide a central point from which workers can be sent to the farms where they are most needed. In each of the camps, the USES maintains a farm placement service. The migratory camps help prevent labor hoarding and the retention of laborers by a farmer longer than is strictly necessary. They also solve many of the problems peculiar to migratory labor—sleeping in box-cars, intoxication, epidemics, and the like.

Governors of farm States may wish to follow the example of one governor who this year asked business houses and offices to close part time during the harvest season, so as to allow town and city people to help out on local farms.

Next Year

It is hoped that through all the proposed plans and programs including utilization of women, high school youth, urban unemployed, and emergency groups from urban areas, the exchange of labor, and similar practices the major 1943 demands for workers will be met. But only by the greatest effort and most complete cooperation of all agencies

and individuals can the Battle of Farm Labor be won in 1943.

In the last analysis, what happens next year is going to depend mainly on what farmers do for themselves. A democracy rests upon individual action by the people. Local communities, as far as possible, must solve their own problems. Farmers can ill afford to sit back trusting to the War Manpower Commission or the War Boards to provide them with workers. They can look to the War Boards and other agencies for all the help that is in them, but it is strictly up to the farmers to solve their individual labor problems as far as they can themselves.

Here are some things individual farmers can do to help provide an adequate labor supply in 1943:

(1) Register their needs with the Employment Service in advance.

Do not wait until the need is immediate. Only through planning can they give the USES and the War Boards a fair chance to help them.

(2) Try to pay fair wages. It is often possible to work out a fair wage scale with neighboring farmers.

(3) Ask deferment for essential workers.

(4) Avoid hoarding labor. Keep workers only as long as they are needed. After that share them.

(5) Make use of student help. Give inexperienced workers jobs they can do. They are the most willing helpers a farmer can have.

(6) Work with the conviction that what they are doing will help win the war and write the peace.

Americans never quit. We are going to win this war. And because it is important in the war, we are going to win the Battle of Farm Labor.



It is my belief that every freedom, every right, every privilege has its price, its corresponding duty without which it cannot be enjoyed. The four duties of the people's revolution, as I see them today, are these:

- 1. The duty to produce to the limit.*
 - 2. The duty to transport as rapidly as possible to the field of battle.*
 - 3. The duty to fight with all that is in us.*
 - 4. The duty to build a peace—just, charitable and enduring.*
- The fourth duty is that which inspires the other three.*

—HENRY A. WALLACE

Camps on Wheels FOR MIGRATORY WORKERS

By N. GREGORY SILVERMASTER. *Mobile camps are becoming increasingly important as a tool for solving the farm labor supply problem on three counts.*



FROM ONE STATE this spring came reports of a shortage of asparagus cutters so serious that thousands of acres of a bumper crop were going to seed and being plowed under. A look at the facts revealed that the main difficulty actually was in securing workers of the same type that had worked on the asparagus crop in previous years. Growers frequently refused help from youths recruited by the Employment Service.

When the smoke of confusion cleared, it was evident that the largest asparagus crop in years had been harvested successfully.

So the story has gone. It is very much the same sort of story that was heard last year, and almost any year before that. The difference is that this year there is a greater chance that the wolf will actually be at the door of those who have been crying "wolf."

It is likely that we are headed for a situation in which there may be fewer workers available for agriculture than there are jobs on farms to fill. Without question the wage labor force attached to agriculture is already materially reduced. But agriculture started the period of war preparations with a considerable labor reserve in the form of seriously

underemployed wage workers. And in spite of numerous claims made this year of serious labor shortages imperiling thousands of acres of important crops, there has been no evidence that such shortages could not be corrected by fairly easy steps.

The problems now at hand are (1) to relieve situations in which there is enough labor available, but a major problem is involved in making the fullest use of it; (2) to lay the groundwork for sound handling of more serious farm labor shortages which may arise in the near future; and (3) to provide a physical base for a system of government-directed farm labor transportation.

Farm Security Administration camps for migratory farm workers have already done much to solve farm labor supply problems of the kind outlined above.

The camp program was started in California toward the end of 1935. The first camps were of the type now known as standard or permanent: They were not designed to be moved, but to remain at their original site. By providing decent shelter, laundries and showers, workshops and community buildings, adequate sanitary facilities and medical care, the FSA camps made a substantial contribution to the welfare of the California migrants. The example they

set had a marked effect on other types of housing available to migratory agricultural workers.

With the introduction of the mobile type camp, the camp program was modified to conform more closely to agriculture's need for seasonal labor in a succession of different places. As much of the equipment of a mobile camp as possible is designed so as to be moved readily from one place to another. Shelters and tent platforms are demountable and moved by trucks. The community building of the permanent camp becomes a large community tent. Clinics and showers are mounted in trailers.

In recent years, mobile camps have become increasingly important in any expansion of the FSA camp program. The flexibility of the mobile camp has been so valuable in meeting the problems associated with a diminishing supply of farm labor that today virtually all camps projected for future constructions will be mobile.

95 Camps

In all, the FSA now operates 95 camps. Of these, 41 are standard or permanent; 49 are mobile, operating on an average of 2 sites for each mobile unit; and 5 are light construction camps, an intermediate type in which some of the facilities can be moved. The standard and light construction camps house an average of 170 families and 730 individuals. The total family capacity of all existing FSA camps is 19,667.

The location of camps throughout the country conforms roughly to the distribution of areas in which large numbers of migratory farm workers are employed. The heaviest concentration of camps, 38 to be exact, is in

the three states of the west coast. There are 9 camps in Idaho, 6 in Arizona, and 2 in Colorado. Ten camps have been placed in Texas, most of them in the southern portion of the State. There are isolated camps or farm labor homes in Arkansas, southeast Missouri, and Michigan, and 27 camps on the eastern seaboard, including 19 mobile units operating on 40 sites.

Little precedent exists for efficient use of the limited supply of seasonal labor in agriculture. Hiring has been haphazard in most parts of the country for obvious reasons. The job is inherently knotty because of the scattered locations in which labor is required, and the scattering of workers themselves throughout the areas where they are needed. And little effort had been made to solve the problem of orderly recruitment and placement before the war since large numbers of underemployed workers were readily available.

The Farm Placement Service has gone a long way, in the Pacific Northwest and in Texas, toward demonstrating how a farm labor force can be used efficiently. In both places, FSA camps have been relied upon heavily. As a matter of fact, the experience in the Northwest might well serve as a model for the use of camps in other areas.

The present network of FSA camps in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho was developed between 1938 and 1941. An office of the Employment Service was established in each camp. During that time, the number of supplementary placements for farm work made by the Service practically doubled. Supplementary farm placements increased by about 110,000, of which more than 100,000 were made from offices in FSA camps

and largely among persons living in the camps.

Since most of the camps were mobile, it was possible for FSA and Farm Placement officials to plan together at the beginning of each season just where each camp would be most effective. And because each camp accommodated more than 150 families, it was possible to gather together in a central place workers who otherwise would have been scattered throughout the entire area, thereby making them available for ready recruitment.

Jalopies

If a job lasted only part of a day, workers could return to camp and go out on another job the same day. Ordinarily, the remainder of the working day would have been lost and the workers involved could only have been sent out again the next day. Workers in the camps were given maps showing main routes of travel and the location of farms where orders for workers had been placed.

The need for camps has been greatly intensified in the last half year by the acute nature of the transportation problem. A large part of the migratory farm labor force traveled by car. The jalopies made famous by *The Grapes of Wrath* had, almost by definition, bad tires. As those tires wear out and cannot be replaced, migrants' cars are immobilized and migrants themselves stranded. The situation is particularly acute along the eastern seaboard because of gasoline rationing.

Plans for government help in transporting farm labor are being drawn up with increased reliance on rail transportation. If farm workers are to be transported on a large

scale, it is evident that they must be gathered together in central places at either end of a trip. Furthermore, camps can be used as points for stopovers on long distance moves. Intelligent planning of farm labor transportation on a national scale demands a network of camps located in important crop areas and accessible to railroad lines, as well as to highways.

Without the proper kind of camps, the difficulty of holding a large group of workers together is increased. Either the standard of living of the workers suffers inexcusably, or the cost of transportation becomes prohibitive. In the past, private labor contractors have transported considerable numbers of farm workers, generally by truck, over long distances. They have frequently had to use coercive methods to hold groups together, and the workers themselves have endured extreme hardships.

There are even more direct ways in which camps can help to overcome farm labor supply difficulties. Some areas which formerly depended on local labor for seasonal needs are now looking for a means of bringing in migrant workers because enough local labor is no longer available. In such places, since shelter for seasonal labor was not needed, it was not provided in the past. The lack of shelter now acts as a barrier in the way of bringing in non-resident labor which might otherwise be available. This problem is most obvious in places where students are being recruited for farm work during vacations, but can only be employed if decent facilities are provided for them.

Remember, too, that seasonal farm workers have been among the most

disease-ridden groups in our society. That they need medical care of the kind provided in FSA camps is obvious. Measured coldly in terms of economic benefit, FSA medical care pays for itself by increasing the number of workers who are available for work at all times. The camps are also provided with nurseries which not only meet a social need, but increase the size of the work force by freeing adults who would otherwise have to stay with their children all day.

Finally, FSA camps make a tangible contribution to the morale and welfare of a group of workers who in the past have suffered from a series of hardships and handicaps which add up to nothing more or less than second-class citizenship. The effects of bad faith and ill will developed over a period of years

cannot be exaggerated. One of the most portentous factors in the present farm labor supply situation is the understandable desire of erstwhile migratory farm workers to find work in urban industries where their pay will be higher and their status better.

The advantages of camps of the kind established by the Farm Security Administration have been recognized in all parts of the country. More than 250 proposals for new camps have come from various areas. Limitation of funds may prevent expansion of the camp program to meet all needs. But the construction of at least 150 new camps, most of them of the mobile type, is an immediate need if agriculture is to contribute its full share to the war effort in the face of a growing labor shortage.

Who owns Cross Creek? The redbirds, I think, more than I, for they will have their nests even in the face of delinquent mortgages. And after I am dead, who am childless, the human ownership of grove and field and hammock is hypothetical. But a long line of redbirds and whippoorwills and bluejays and ground doves will descend from the present owners of nests in the orange trees, and their claim will be less subject to dispute than that of any human heirs. Houses are individual and can be owned, like nests, and fought for. But what of the land? It seems to me that the earth can be borrowed but not bought. It may be used, but not owned. It gives itself in response to love and tending, offers its seasonal flowering and fruiting. But we are tenants and not possessors, lovers and not masters. Cross Creek belongs to the wind and the rain, to the sun and the seasons, to the cosmic secrecy of seed—and beyond all, to time.

—MARJORIE KINNAN RAWLINGS, in CROSS CREEK,
CHARLES SCRIBNERS' SONS.

AGRICULTURAL LABOR— *A Challenge to Democracy*

By HENRY H. FOWLER. *Here is a broad plea for immediate action to give the farm worker the same rights, standards of living, and status as any other worker.*



ONE of the principal architects of the Constitution, James Madison, peering into the future, estimated that by 1930 the population of the United States would probably be 192 million, and that a majority of the people would then be "without property or the hope of acquiring it."

"What is to be done?" he asked.

Confessing his inability to answer his own question, he forecast the need for alterations of public policy to meet the transition he foresaw: "To the effect of these changes, intellectual, moral, and social, the institutions and laws of the country must be adapted; and it will require for the task all the wisdom of the wisest patriots."

The whole fabric of social and labor legislation that conditions rights of owners and managers of productive property to employ their fellow countrymen for a wage constitute the adaptation of institutions and laws to which he referred.

But what of agricultural labor in this process? The facts speak for themselves. The important point is that the relatively underprivileged and disadvantaged status of agricultural workers is conjoined to a

consistent policy of omitting this class of labor from the purview of practically all social and labor legislation.

Even the extension of legislative protection to the rights of labor to organize and bargain collectively, to receive a minimum wage, and to obtain social security guarantees, did not include the agricultural laborer. Yet at the same time, observers noted a lack of vitality in the so-called family-type farm, the traditional agricultural ladder, the institution of the hired man living with the farm family, and other symbols of an agriculture where employer-employee relationships are of minimum concern.

In the wake of an expanding cash crop and commercial farming system that is the envy and breadbasket of the world, the pattern of the industrial revolution is becoming apparent on the land. We are faced with the necessity of answering Mr. Madison's question as it relates to those who work on the farm as well as in a factory. Their stake in economic democracy is a job working on land they do not own. They must find their economic "life, liberty and pursuit of happiness" through an employer-employee relationship.

The problem of finding an appropriate place for agricultural workers in our political economy is as concrete as an experiment in a laboratory. It consists of devising and effectuating means that, under the stresses and strains of our changing economic structure, will guarantee to the agricultural worker a free human existence. But it is a problem that was substantially ignored during the first three decades of this century.

Perhaps the things that go into the making of a desirable life have never been better characterized than in terms of the now famous Four Freedoms. We take for granted in a political democracy that the public interest in the preservation and strengthening of the civil rights contemplated by the Four Freedoms is so great that governmental power is properly dedicated to that end. Yet mere pronouncement is not enough. We must often use the processes of government to translate rights into living realities.

The history of agriculture from the beginning of recorded time makes it clear that this field of endeavor is not always free from the barbarities of a slave system or an oppressive inequality of economic status. When the incidents of land ownership were concentrated away from a great body of those dependent upon it for subsistence, economic or even political tyranny has often followed. Public intervention to find new land for individual owners or to help agricultural workers acquire existing land holdings always has characterized enlightened government. But when there is no more land, the choice lies between preserving a system of holdings for a limited number of individuals, or

putting the rights and privileges of laborers into effect by law or custom.

The Family Farm

As a nation, we have always looked with favor on the family-type farm. True, our disposition has not been adequately implemented. But it is accepted political doctrine.

Our face has been turned away from that other method of achieving economic freedom for those who work the land—the declaration and support of rights and privileges. This political ellipsis persists despite the continued existence of large-scale agricultural operations, sometimes highly specialized, requiring large outlays of capital and the employment of gangs of wage laborers. For the most part in several areas, the dominant employer-employee relationship in agriculture is something other than the relationship between the traditional farmer and his hired man: It approaches the industrial or factory pattern.

Let us assume that effort to preserve an economic balance between owners and workers, employers and employees, on the land as elsewhere is a legitimate function of a democratic government. What, then, are the rights and privileges necessary to economic democracy for agricultural wage workers?

Too often the answer to this question reflects undue emphasis upon material things. Indeed, most suggestions excited by the plight of agricultural workers call upon public financial aid and practices of paternalism to save the body and brawn of labor. The potentialities of employee association and collective bargaining and the application of accepted labor legislation is quite often

passed over when agricultural labor is discussed.

The right of workers to associate together and act collectively to better their economic, social, and political status is more than an abstract civil liberty: It is fundamental to a democratic society.

Recent investigations have proved what has long been obvious to informed observers—that the guarantee of government protection to the right of association and collective bargaining is as necessary on the land as in the factory. Yet the National Labor Relations Act specifically exempts agricultural labor. In some areas where farm workers have attempted to organize and bargain collectively, the absence of legal protection has invited organized employer resistance and repression. We do not know whether or not that pattern would be duplicated in other areas, largely because employee organization and collective bargaining in agriculture have yet to be attempted on a significant scale.

Disorganized

Coupled with the lack of employee association is the existence of a disorganized agricultural labor market. Much agricultural employment is seasonal, casual, irregular, and migratory. Too often this means a lack of job security, underemployment, and unnecessary migration for the workers. It means disorganized hiring and recruiting. And it means that there has been no organized approach to the problem of labor supply. These conditions have made agricultural labor in many areas not an occupation, but an auxiliary to a system of pub-

lic relief—when there was a system of public relief.

Assuming that a job with its incidental rights and privileges is the vehicle of participation in economic democracy by those who do not own productive property, it would seem that a large percentage of agricultural labor is without even a base upon which to participate.

To this serious disadvantage, add a national system of old age and unemployment security that not only omits agricultural labor, but is also ill adapted to relieve the seasonal or periodic unemployment involved. As a result, "freedom from want" for agricultural labor is limited to the right of moving from State to State in search of a job and applying for relief. Some State and local laws even attempt to restrict this right.

A public policy that promotes decasualization of the agricultural labor market, coupled with the adaptation of unemployment compensation techniques to cover seasonal and part-time unemployment and an extension of old age and survivor's insurance, are needed to lay the groundwork of social security for agricultural labor. It goes without saying that this would still entail an arrangement for calling upon labor reserves during relatively brief periods of peak labor demand. Unfair competition from child or relief labor would have to be avoided.

We have pledged floors under wages and ceilings over hours of work for the great body of those who labor for a wage. Exempt from this guarantee are the higher salaried employees and agricultural labor. Foreign countries have shown us that such legislation is

administratively feasible for agricultural labor. And the justification for the exemption that is sometimes advanced—that low standards of wages and working conditions are necessary because of the precarious financial state of a number of farm operators—has neither economic nor political appeal.

Low wages for agricultural workers are an indirect, but nonetheless grinding pressure upon the small farmer. He must figure the value of his own labor at low standards in order to place his product in competition with the products of "sweat shop" labor employed by large agricultural employers. The establishment of labor standards could be so limited as to affect adversely the economic position of only the relatively small number of farm operators who are substantial employers of farm labor.

In the final analysis, the exemption of agricultural labor from the Fair Labor Standards Act amounts to discrimination against a helpless group.

Break

These are but a few examples of the rights and privileges that immediate action could give farm labor. Economic democracy for farm labor cannot be accomplished in a day. Neither can it be won by edict. It can only be achieved by practice—by a course of repetitive conduct that accepts the farm laborer's right to the same break as any other type of an American citizen.

All of which calls for an orientation of attitude on the part of agricultural employers, employees and public agencies. Look at the various employer mechanisms for fixing

Than Any

Farmers have made greater immediate contributions to our defense effort than any other group in America.

—R. M. EVANS

wages. Scan the composition of State and Federal agencies charged with the welfare of agricultural workers. Note any consideration by public and private groups of problems affecting agriculture. You will seldom find a chosen voice speaking in a representative way for farm labor.

Agricultural labor must be represented by persons of its own choosing at various levels of public and private action affecting its status.

Perhaps a good place to begin would be with a publicly sponsored procedure for determining fair wages and considering fair working conditions for agricultural labor. Collective bargaining procedures will develop only with great difficulty and at risk of distortion in many areas. The successful use of wage boards in the British Isles and some local experience in this country indicate that a publicly supervised system for the collective consideration of wages and working conditions is not impracticable.

Under the stress of war, we have learned that the habit of having representatives of employers, employees, and the government sit down at a single table is a simple but healthy

expedient for inducing democratic action.

Many other desirable rights and privileges for agricultural labor will suggest themselves to the student of the problems of this disadvantaged group. Housing, medical, and other special forms of public assistance are certainly necessary until annual wages and working conditions are adjusted. Some have been attempted and proved their worth.

To date, however, the effort to answer the challenge to democracy that the plight of agricultural workers presents has been ineffective. Several reasons are obvious. For one thing, the group affected is inarticulate and almost completely helpless, lacking any economic, social, or political base for pressing corrective action. For another, measures of relief have been suggested piecemeal. The tendency to indulge halfway attempts has satisfied any waves of popular sympathy for the human beings affected. But the hard and difficult task of erecting a well-balanced scientific system of employer-employee relationships has been quietly passed over.

Which?

It should be obvious that action to that end is needed. This action in the form of a program of definite and cohesive legislative measures must assure the enjoyment of the same rights, standards of living, and status to agricultural labor as is provided for other labor. Such action must be adapted to the special problems of agriculture. Some differences in the treatment of agricultural labor and other types of labor will be justified. But such differences must never include a denial of the right of the agricultural laborer to play an important part in shaping his own destiny.

The final test of any action rests in the answers to two questions: Will the agricultural laborer be the tool of agricultural industry, cared for skillfully or unwisely like land, machinery and stock? Or will he be protected in his exercise of the rights of free speech, assembly, and association on a par with any other citizen, whether worker or employer?

The choice between harsh tyranny, vapid paternalism, and economic democracy is clear.

Women

It is very clear to me that if we are going to meet our farm production goals we will have to depend more and more on the women.

CLAUDE R. WICKARD

To fix or not to fix

FARM WAGE RATES

By WILLIAM T. HAM. *When and if it becomes necessary to close the gap between wages of agriculture and industry, we can learn much from the experience of Great Britain.*



WHEN is a shortage of farm labor not a shortage? The answer, according to many people, is when the alleged shortage derives from the low level of agricultural wages.

Issuing a recent proposal for establishing a system of wage regulation during the War Emergency, for example, the Farm Security Administration put it this way: "The magnetism of high wages in war or semi-war industries [exerts] an attraction on workers who in ordinary times would have remained on farms and in rural regions. Even in 1941 the disparity between agricultural and urban wages was driving the most efficient and experienced workers away from the farms."

Under these circumstances, it is argued that if enough manpower is to remain in agriculture—if the Government is to direct labor without compulsion into the most productive channels—farm wages must not be left to chance. Instead, they must be established by governmental authority at a level that will do away with the irresistible pull exerted by higher wage rates in industry.

But even if there were no war, advocates of governmental fixing of minimum wages in agriculture could

marshal several reasons for their stand.

First, there is the fact that industrial wage earners have for some time past been the beneficiaries of such action. Under the Fair Labor Standards Act, farm workers are specifically excluded from the benefits to be derived from having a floor below which wage rates may not sink.

That this discrimination against farm workers is administratively necessary has never been seriously maintained. Besides, none have denied that the need on the part of farm workers, especially seasonal ones, for such protection is greater than that on the part of most workers in factory, mill, or mine. In other countries where floors have been placed by the Government under wages, minimum wage legislation has been applied to agricultural workers shortly after it has reached industrial workers.

Second, the process whereby farm wage rates are usually settled is by nature chaotic. Of all markets, the labor market is one of those least subject to control, especially by the sellers of labor. Wage rates, therefore, are among those prices that are most irregular and fluctuating. And when it comes to vacillation, farm

wage rates, especially seasonal ones, are in a class by themselves. In any area devoted to specialty crops, rates for the same work may vary from day to day, even from hour to hour, within a range governed only by the needs of the grower and the desperation of penniless workers.

Third, trade unions have been largely ineffectual among farm workers in this country.

We Cannot Wait

Accordingly, it is argued that in farming—as in various branches of the clothing industry, the longshore trades and the service trades—the stabilizing and standardizing influence of some regulatory body is required.

In ordinary times, however, low farm wage rates and irregular earnings receive less attention than in times of crisis. Reason: by and large the farm labor market operates to the advantage of the growers, and the farm workers are usually leaderless and uninformed. In the long run, moreover, there is a rough correspondence between movements of farm wages and those of farm income. But a nation at war cannot wait for long run tendencies to operate. Human resources must be mobilized without delay.

The proposal that the Government should regulate farm wage rates proceeds on one of three assumptions: (1) That farmers in general are able to pay higher wages if the Government should set them; (2) that if any considerable group is not able to do so, the Government will assist them; and (3) that it may be necessary to force farmers to pay higher wages, even though it ruins them to do so, for only in this way

can socially undesirable types of farming be eliminated. Although the third point of view is not likely to have much appeal in wartime, the fact remains that under war conditions the ability of farmers to pay is of secondary importance.

The important thing is that the Government must see to it that manpower in vital agricultural production is not subject to the caprices of an unorganized farm labor market.

To support the contention that farm wages must be regulated, reference is frequently made to the experience of Great Britain. The first attempt to regulate agricultural wage rates there came as a result of the loss of hired farm manpower during World War I. The second World War has led to a great expansion of the British system.

Great Britain

In Great Britain hired farm workers are relatively more important to agriculture than in the United States. To boot, of the hired workers, a larger proportion work the year around than is the case with us. But although the problem of regulation is simpler in Great Britain than it would be here, much can be gleaned from a look at what happened there.

The minimum wage principle was first enacted into law in Australia in 1896. Ten years later it was adopted by the mother country, for the purpose of abolishing socially harmful conditions in certain "sweated" trades. In 1912 it was applied for the first time to a trade that was not sweated—that of the miners, a well paid and well organized group. Thus the minimum wage became not merely a tool to

be wielded on behalf of a submerged group, but an accepted procedure in the technique of collective regulation of wages.

The British wage boards for agriculture were set up under the Corn Production Act of 1917, on the model established in 1909 by the Trade Boards Act for determining minimum wages for industrial workers. In order to encourage the production of small grains, the act provided a subsidy for farmers, on condition that farmers pay employees at a rate to be determined for each county by a central Agricultural Wages Board appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture and composed of representatives of farmers and farm workers. Local committees composed of farmers and workers were set up to advise the central board. This centralized scheme proved to be poorly adapted to agriculture, and was repealed in 1921.

The advent of a Labor Government in 1924 led to the passage of the Agricultural Wages [Regulation] Act of 1924, which set up decentralized wage-fixing committees, to be assisted by a central board. In the case of industrial workers, the mechanism was very different, wage rates being determined by one central representative board.

In 1937 a measure similar to the Agricultural Wages Act was adopted by Parliament, to be applied in Scotland. And in April 1940, to meet war time requirements the act was amended to give the central Agricultural Wages Board power, after consulting with the local committees, to establish a national minimum wage for agriculture. Such is the mechanism through which wartime regulation of farm wages in Great Britain is taking place.

Under the system introduced in 1924, recognition was given to the scattered nature of the agricultural industry. The burden of responsibility for setting minimum wages for farm workers rested with the local Agricultural Wages Committees, each of which covered one or more counties. The findings of these committees were given statutory effect in that they were issued by the central Agricultural Wages Board, which, however, could not revise them. Even the Minister of Agriculture could not change rates established by the local board. He had authority merely to order reconsideration of a finding, which might then be adhered to by the local body.

Duties

The county agricultural wages committees consist of representatives of farmers and of workers, in equal numbers, of two impartial members, and of a chairman. Representative members are usually nominated by interested organizations, such as the three farm workers unions and the National Farmers Union. They are appointed by the Minister of Agriculture.

It is the business of the local agricultural wages committees to determine minimum time rates of wages for all agricultural workers in each county. Besides this duty, which is mandatory, the committees have power to fix minimum piece rates and order payment of arrears. The committees are required to set forth what items in kind—such as board and lodging, fuel, potatoes, milk, and so forth—may be reckoned as part payment of wages instead of cash, and to evaluate such items.

In setting wage rates, the committees are given a good deal of leeway. The Agricultural Wages Act directed that committees "shall secure, so far as practicable, to able bodied men such wages as in the opinion of the Committee are adequate to promote efficiency and to enable a man in an ordinary case to maintain himself and his family in accordance with such standards of comfort as may be reasonable in relation to the nature of his occupation." Wage rates are first "proposed" for a brief period, to permit objections, and then are "fixed."

Although English farmers used to complain that the wage rates fixed under the statutes exceeded their ability to pay, their dissatisfaction was lessened by the increase in farm prices due to regulation of imports, marketing reorganization, and Government subsidies.

Farm workers, on the other hand, declared that the minimum wage rates were maintained at too low a level. They charged that wage rates between adjoining counties were not properly coordinated, and complained about lax enforcement.

Fact is, between 1927 and 1937 the average weekly minimum rates for adult male workers rose about 30 percent. And when the value of perquisites was added, the total weekly wage approached the minimum required to cover basic human needs, although well below the level set for adult male industrial workers. In addition, average weekly hours declined; the majority of farm workers secured a weekly half holiday and additional pay for overtime; practices regarding payments in kind were standardized; and the organization of workers and employers was stimulated.

Despite the grumbling of farmers and workers, there were no important strikes in agriculture from the year the Agricultural Wage Act was passed. For a period during which agriculture was in the doldrums, this constitutes a remarkable record.

The success of the agricultural wages acts under prewar conditions is further pointed up by this fact: after 13 years of trial in England and Wales, during a period of great difficulty for agriculture, the provisions were extended to Scotland in 1937.

Came the War

Then came war. From September 1939 to May 1940, some 70,000 skilled laborers were lost to agriculture.

In the first half year of the war, little was done to check this loss. But in April 1940, the Conservative government passed the Agricultural Wages [Regulation] Amendment Act. The changes introduced by this act embodied the government's wartime policy of establishing a national floor below which agricultural wage rates might not sink. County committees might set rates above the floor. Fact is, they were required to adjust the minimum rates of other classes of workers in accordance with the minimum established by the central board for adult males.

Almost immediately upon the passage of this Act, the Coalition government established a national minimum of 48 shillings a week for adult male agricultural workers in England and Wales, effective June 30, 1940. At the corresponding season a year earlier, the average minimum rate in England and Wales

was 34 shillings and sixpence. At the same time, the Government issued the so-called labor "conscription" order, under which farm workers might not be hired away from agricultural employment. In November 1941, the Agricultural Wages Board raised the national minimum weekly wages for adult male agricultural laborers to 60 shillings a week. This gave agricultural workers a basic rate higher than that for railwaymen.

In April 1942, farm wage rates were 173 percent of the wage rates prevailing in August 1939. The next greatest increase was that of coal miners: 139 percent. Changes in prices received by farmers have more than kept pace with the changes in basic wage rates for farm workers.

Higher farm wage rates have not been the only method Great Britain has used to meet the problem of providing manpower for agriculture.

A vigorous campaign has carried the Women's Land Army in England and Wales from a membership of 8,000 in June 1940 to 28,000 in March 1942. Systems of rapid training have been devised for young people, women, soldiers on leave, men beyond the draft age, conscientious objectors, retired persons, old-age pensioners and Italian prisoners-of-war.

Attention has been given to improving the housing conditions of farm workers. Hundreds of hostels have been built, chiefly for the use of the Women's Land Army. Systems to transport farm workers have been developed. County War Agricultural Committees serve as clearing houses for farm labor, study the efficiency of each farm in using it.

As America enters the second

year of the war, the problem of manpower in agriculture will become more insistent. Half measures that served in 1942 will not meet the need in 1943. It may become necessary to close the gap between farm wage rates and wage rates for common labor in industry, in order that the drift of labor from farms in response to higher wages may be nullified.

When and if the time comes to close the gap, we will need to rely upon some such measures as those taken in Great Britain. And at that time, we might well draw from British experience in fixing farm wages the following suggestions:

1. That agricultural wage rates can be established in their proper relationship to highly varied local conditions only by a local board.

2. That the findings of such boards require review at a higher level in order to secure uniformity.

3. That in a war emergency, national policy relative to wage rates in agriculture as compared with those in industry can only be carried out by a central board.

4. That all such measures are limited by the ability of various groups of producers to pay, to which appropriate measures must be directed by the Government.

5. That concern for wage rates alone is not enough to keep labor voluntarily on the farm. Housing, transportation, and the extension to agricultural labor of social services also require attention.

Even these measures may not for long forestall the application of compulsion in order to safeguard the necessary labor supply. But if it comes, as it has in England, compulsion will require the services of an effective system of wage determination.

WE CAN BALANCE *Supply AND Demand*

By ROBERT K. LAMB. *The proper way to meet a labor shortage is not to create a surplus, the writer says, but to build orderly procedures for adjusting labor demands and supplies.*



MOST FARMERS thought of agricultural labor in terms of permanent surpluses, when they thought of it at all before Pearl Harbor. Those interested in improving the condition of agricultural laborers were busy working out plans for the decasualization of the agricultural labor market. Today the demands of the armed forces and war industries are effecting their own decasualization of the market.

The fact that a labor surplus is turning into a labor shortage for the duration is setting two widely separated types of developments into motion. The first set is based on the premise that the proper way to overcome a labor shortage is to create a labor surplus. The second set is in accord with the writer's conviction that this war offers a real opportunity to build orderly procedures for balancing labor supply and demand.

Faced with a seller's market, those who are fostering the first set of developments want to restore a buyer's market by whatever means possible. To that end, demands are being made for the importation of workers from other countries. True, the Department of Agriculture has announced plans to tap Mexican work-

ers under certain conditions. But one also hears calls for Puerto Ricans, Bahamans, and unemployed Chinese from Cuba.

Similarly, widespread agitation is under way for the creation of women's land armies, corps of boys and girls of high school age, and "give a vacation" movements on the part of town dwellers. Some even call for the use of criminals.

Most of these demands can be duplicated in the records of the last World War. But they take on fresh meaning as indicative of a desire in some quarters to pursue traditional methods of securing a labor force at any cost.

These groups are by no means representative of the American farmer and his family, although they are intent upon creating this impression. They automatically label all talk of adjustment to a changed situation as social reform or worse. It seems unthinkable to them that agricultural wages, which lagged behind agricultural prices in recovering from the depression, should now begin to close the gap. They fail to understand that even rising farm wages are still far behind the level attainable in war industries, that annual earnings in industrial jobs today are out of all proportion to annual earnings in agriculture.

Their first impulse is to manufacture new sources of oversupply, so as to return the labor market to the *status quo ante*.

One of their chief arguments is that crops planted at the request of the Government will be lost. Some of the bolder spokesmen for the group even threaten to plow under these crops, rather than see them waste for lack of labor. Others threaten not to plant unless labor supplies are in sight. Figures to date suggest, however, that the acreages of crops unharvested do not exceed those of previous years, even though the total acreages have been increased.

Education

To correct such misapprehensions is undoubtedly, in considerable measure, an educational problem. Many of those participating in the agricultural labor market as employers or their agents are practical men accustomed to learning only by hard experience. They will no doubt learn by experience in the course of this war how to adjust themselves to a labor market in which supply does not exceed demand, and in which as time goes on it may actually become a little short of demand.

Unfortunately for the Nation as a whole, many of those public servants who are strategically placed to spread such understanding at this time are themselves in need of knowledge. Unaccustomed to operating in a seller's market, they have long been active in trying to retain a buyer's market. Decasualization of the labor market—whether by accidental or administrative means—is hardly more than a phrase to them.

Manpower mobilization today is an indivisible whole. The armed services, war industries, and agriculture are all competing in the same short market. It would be wrong to infer that shortages are yet general, but if the war is to be carried to a successful conclusion such shortages inevitably will emerge.

The cornerstone, then, of a successful public employment service in agriculture must be its ability to place the great majority of those workers employed for group labor. Because of the competition of war jobs, the service must be well equipped to inform the worker whether working and living conditions on these jobs are up to standard. Besides, a worker must be able to return to the service upon completing one job with a reasonable expectation that he will be placed in another job.

A single placement means nothing, and a successful service calls for as nearly continuous placement as possible throughout the crop year. This calls, in turn, for a knowledge of demand, and an ability to make estimates of available supply which do not now exist. But there are other knotty problems facing us if we are to make full use of our available labor supply.

For one thing, there is the problem of transportation. It will require large scale planning to transfer workers from job to job, and in cases where workers are not housed adjacent to the fields, to transport them to and from work as well.

For another thing, there is the matter of wage rates. Failure to meet the question of the gap between wages and annual earnings in agriculture as compared with those in other occupations can lead in but

one direction: Workers who can escape from substandard conditions will do so. This, in turn, will produce an early demand for freezing workers in agriculture.

Query

In solving these and related problems, let us ask ourselves these questions: Are we willing to maintain agricultural labor in a kind of "second-class citizenship"? Or will we take advantage of the challenging opportunity offered by war to alter the status of agricultural labor?

War is reversing trends which have developed over a period of twenty years. Unless by an economic miracle full-time employment is achieved immediately after the war, we must expect an early return to these trends. And if this comes to pass, it will require the strongest kind of flexibility to withstand the inevitable flood of underprivileged persons drawn from the ranks of the unemployed in industry and the under-employed in agriculture.

The effect of creating a vast post-war army of surplus agricultural laborers is bound to threaten the very foundations of American agriculture. If those workers who had been imported from abroad should stay to swell this army, creating competition between native white Americans who trace their origins in this country back to colonial beginnings and workers of other races and colors, the consequences cannot fail to be explosive.

The possibilities of decasualizing American agriculture at this time should not be dismissed lightly as the proposals of social reformers. They should be recognized as perhaps the last opportunity we shall have for some time ahead to build

orderly procedures for adjusting labor demand and supply in this most disorderly of all labor markets.

Space will not permit a full scale picture of measures now being proposed by those interested in improving the conditions of agricultural labor. Let us remember that in the War Manpower Commission, of which Secretary of Agriculture Wickard is a member, we have for the first time an agency charged with achieving manpower mobilization by means of adjusting war labor demands and supplies. We should now begin to balance these competing demands and supplies by an over-all plan designed to recognize that:

1. War conditions require the conservation of agricultural labor supplies and full use of local supplies.
2. Programs for agricultural output should be carefully drawn with a schedule of demand and supply of labor in mind.
3. The status of farm labor must be raised. For example, local civilian defense councils should interest themselves in the housing, health and education facilities of agricultural workers. If young people are to be used for farm work, their employment should be safeguarded by hiring through official channels for work off the family farm.
4. As wages become more and more important in holding workers on the farm, some machinery for determining fair wages probably should be evolved, an agricultural counterpart of the industry wage committees under the Wage-Hour Act.
5. To deal with the problem of annual earnings, local groups including farmers, public officials, and

others interested in maximizing agricultural output will have to arrange for seasonal by-employment which will give the agricultural worker sufficient annual income to induce him to remain in agriculture. Relief is not an adequate substitute for such employment during a period of this kind, even where local authorities are willing to continue to pay it.

As to the post-war period, we must guard against the possibility that the wartime premium on large scale operations and the use of labor saving devices will lead to a further decline in the importance of the family-size farm. In order to make a living after the war, many new thousands of former farm operators, together with many of those who

have been lured away from the farm by high construction or industrial wages, will join the ranks of agricultural labor. It is this flood-tide for which we now have an opportunity to build the dikes and levees.

To protect agriculture in general and the agricultural worker in particular during the post-war period, we should think now about planning public works and work projects. Possibly a fourth category of general relief will need to be added to the existing Social Security Act. Above all, we cannot afford to treat the agricultural labor market in the same way we did during the depression: as a catch-basin for the rural unemployed and for those urban workers who flee to the land.

Facts About Youth

(Excerpts from a general report, Youth and the Future, published by the American Youth Commission in January 1942.)

High-school enrollments were expanded in the past decade by 2,000,000 or more.

Public work programs were provided most of the time for 300,000 to 500,000 out-of-school youth under 21, but there were so few opportunities for regular employment that during most of the decade 2,000,000 or 3,000,000 out-of-school youth under 21 were unemployed.

Sixteen has become the age up to which school attendance is frequently compulsory, and it is also the age now commonly set by child labor laws as the minimum for full-time employment in manufacturing industries.

Each year in the United States about 1,750,000 young men and women offer their services as beginning workers. About half are town and city youth; the other half have grown up in villages or on farms.

The number of farm boys who reach maturity each year is more than twice the number of farms that fall vacant annually through retirement or death of older farmers.

The Labor Exchange

Function IN AGRICULTURE

By WILLIAM J. ROGERS and ARTHUR J. HOLMAAS. *The writers regard the public labor exchange as the answer to the question of questions: how to get the right number of qualified workers in the right place at the right time?*



DIRECT recruitment by farmers and direct job hunting by workers have failed to bring order into the farm labor market. Private employment exchanges have failed to eliminate the chaos. The only remaining answer is a system of public labor exchanges.

Such a system may also fail. But if properly organized and adequately supported by farmers and workers, chances of its success are good. Certainly, much confusion can be eliminated from the labor market, even though it may not be possible in a period of labor shortage to furnish as much labor as farmers want.

The purpose of a public employment exchange is crystal-clear: to see that the right number of qualified workers is at the right place at the right time to meet the requirements of agricultural production.

Requirements and demand for workers may not be identical. As in other industries, employers in agriculture like to have an abundance of workers apply for the work. The more labor available, the greater the control the employer can exert over the labor market. In a period of shrinking labor supply, it is par-

ticularly important that the number of workers recruited for an area should be based on crop requirements rather than on demand.

The right time and the right place are as important as the right number. Both employers and workers benefit from an orderly direction of farm labor. Unnecessary migration, delay between jobs, and uncertainty as to the availability at specific times and places of workers on the one hand and of jobs on the other hand—all these conditions strike body blows at morale, efficiency, and production.

The characteristics of the agricultural labor market must receive considered attention if chaos is to be converted to order, if essential labor requirements are to be filled, and if manpower is to be used to best advantage in this period of grave national stress. But a successful public labor exchange also requires the complete understanding and cooperation of both farmers and farm workers. The exchange must be organized on the basis of local conditions. It must be closely tied to the vagaries of the immediate situation.

The work of the exchange in any one area must be coordinated with

that in other local areas if supply and demand are to be adjusted between areas to correct seasonal maldistribution of workers. Such a coordinated system must be built upon efficient labor exchanges in each community. Services should first be provided to employers and workers in the local labor exchange area. In general, all local workers should be placed before workers are brought in from other areas.

Similarly, basic requirements of local employers should be met before workers are referred to employers in other areas. Under a disorganized system, workers in their home districts may remain totally or partially unemployed because of an influx of outside workers. Another district may become entirely devoid of workers because of an unfounded rumor of better opportunities across the hill. Referral of workers between areas cannot succeed unless both employers and workers in the area make active use of local exchanges.

The labor exchange function in agriculture encompasses two extremes. Regular farm hands must be recruited one by one, and placed with individual employers. The personality and habits of both worker and employer must be considered, in addition to ability of the worker and the requirements of the job.

At the other extreme, peak harvests often require the recruitment and employment of workers in groups without attention to individual qualifications. The stress is on number rather than on skill. Since speed is of the essence in many agricultural harvests, recruitment must be faster than for any other industry.

Picture

Detailed knowledge of labor needs and supply in every agricultural area—and of every area which may contain an available supply of workers—is needed before the local exchange can operate.

The over-all picture of the agricultural industry in the area must show the relative needs for specific types of workers at specific times and places. This can be based in part on past employment data showing both hired and family workers and seasonal and year-around hands. Employment data must be checked against the acreages planted to various crops in the community.

A further check on the harvest labor requirements should be made through analysis of the estimated production yield for each crop. Planting, cultivating, and harvesting dates should be entered on a seasonal calendar so as to show the number of workers required by each activity at different times of the year. The local exchange must also secure data on the methods of farming employed in the community, as they affect labor needs.

Besides, the exchange must know the sizes of farms in an area in order to determine the length of time a worker may be needed. It must know the location of farms if it is to refer workers to them. It must have facts on the hiring practices of employers: Do they hire single individuals, family groups, or groups of single men? Do they pay in cash on an hourly, piece-rate, or monthly basis? Or is the wage payment in terms of cash plus perquisites, which may include housing, board, and other items? Prevailing wage

rates, working conditions, and facilities for housing and transportation of workers are other important factors that must be determined in advance.

On the supply side, certain facts are needed, too. Data on the numbers of workers more or less permanently located in the area and usually available for agricultural work must be secured. Knowledge of the habits and skills of these workers will aid in determining whether they are available and suitable to meet particular demands.

Information about workers in the area not normally employed on farms is required to prepare plans for drawing more workers into agriculture if that proves necessary. This knowledge usually takes the form of information about various groups in the community, and the manner in which they can be reached through their group leaders. The group leaders may be teachers, ministers, storeowners—persons having the confidence of particular groups of individuals who may be available for work on farms. The possibility of these workers living off the farms and transporting themselves to and from work every day should receive attention.

On the basis of all these facts about the agricultural labor market in a specific area, the employment exchange can be placed in a strategic position within the community where it will be easily accessible both to employers and to workers. The approximate number of workers required for various seasons can be determined in advance. Then the needs can be weighed against the approximate number of workers available.

If enough workers are not avail-

able within the community, plans can be made for importing workers from other areas. The location of such areas can be learned through established channels of communication with other local employment exchanges that may have found the supply of workers within their areas to be larger than the requirements. Similarly, ways can be worked out to shift workers from farm to farm several times during the season, thereby bringing about the best possible use of every man hour.

How It Works

Armed with these general data and with these advance plans, a local labor exchange is set to operate. But the manager of the exchange can do little more until the individuals in the community give him specific orders to operate. Farmers must order workers to set in motion the machinery for recruitment. Workers must apply for jobs to set in motion the machinery for placement.

The farmer's order for workers should be placed as well in advance of the time the workers are needed as possible. It should contain information as to the type of workers wanted, wages offered, housing conditions, length of the job, and the specific time when the workers must report for duty. A worker registering for a job should supply information about his skills and experience, the wages he will accept, and so forth.

On the basis of orders and applications, the manager of the labor exchange then chooses one or more likely applicants for referral to a prospective employer. A system whereby each referral is followed up will enable the labor exchange to

know which jobs have been filled, which applicants are still available.

The manager of the labor exchange should not sit idly by waiting for applications. Drawing on his knowledge of supply and demand factors in the community, he should take the initiative in stimulating farmers who may need labor and workers who may be available, to use the employment exchange as a clearing house. While visiting farmers and talking with workers on the street, he may receive orders that can and should be accepted on the spot.

Although the procedure just described is particularly applicable to the needs of individual farmers requiring skilled or year-around workers, it can also be adapted to orders from farmers requiring large numbers of seasonal workers, as well as to groups of workers applying for jobs as a unit. The order form and the registration form in these cases should be similar. Instead of listing the skills or experience of an individual worker, the average experience of the group can be indicated.

On Tap

When the labor supply becomes short, it is the duty of the labor exchange to tap labor reserves—high school and college youth, retired farmers and other older men, urban family groups, women, and relief workers. The extent to which these local labor reserves can be tapped will depend upon the willingness of farmers to employ workers not normally engaged in agriculture. It will also depend upon such factors as training facilities, wage rates, working conditions, housing, seasonality of operations, and how near other jobs are.

It is also the duty of the local labor exchange to bring about the best possible use of the labor force within an area. In an industry like agriculture marked by short periods of employment and rapid labor turnover, direction must be given to the routing of workers from job to job. Since the best methods of routing will vary with local conditions, decisions as to ways and means must be made locally.

The period of operations cannot be divorced from the period of planning. Although planning should be as complete as possible before the season begins, continuous revision is needed to meet changes in supply and demand. Day-to-day decisions are the order in a dynamic labor market.

Clearance

When labor exchanges operate efficiently in each agricultural community, the problem of adjusting the supply of workers between areas is comparatively simple. Workers can be referred between exchanges in contiguous local areas by telephone or letter. Clearance between more distant areas is more difficult only in that it is impossible for each local office to keep directly in touch with every other office.

Conclusion: A clearinghouse is needed. Natural areas for recruitment and placement transcend both county and State lines. To be effective, the local labor exchanges must be coordinated into a closely integrated national system. Both responsibility and authority for taking action to meet local problems must, however, remain with each local labor exchange.

Coordination can be secured through a two-way system of current reports. The central office should be kept informed of labor surpluses or deficits, together with all problems that transcend local areas. In turn, the central office should inform the local offices of areas from or to which clearance of workers may be feasible. It should let them know of action taken to meet problems which transcend local areas and tell them about methods used in other areas to handle particular problems, too.

Students of farm employment and many farmers alike have long recognized the need for a public labor exchange service. A good start in developing methods for recruitment and placement of farm workers was made during World War I under the first U. S. Employment Service. Marked as it was by labor shortages, this was a period when farmers knitted their brows about getting the help they needed for wartime production.

During the early 1930's, agriculture was confronted with a different kind of labor problem—a serious oversupply of workers. The need for a system of labor exchanges to systematize the routing and referral of workers to jobs was recognized in 1933 by specific congressional act providing that a farm placement service be set up as a component of the newly created Federal-State system of employment offices. This service made tremendous strides in guiding migratory workers to areas of employment opportunity during the era of unemployment.

Mandatory

As war came nearer and nearer to our shores, a shortage of available

workers again threatened the agricultural labor market. Increased activity on the industrial front created a maldistribution of the labor supply. Some areas had far less farm workers, while other areas still had surpluses. Closer coordination of the labor exchange functions being performed in the different communities and States became mandatory.

Result: The U. S. Employment Service was federalized early in 1942 to help bring about better distribution and greater utilization of all manpower. The recently established War Manpower Commission has resulted in further coordination of the labor needs of agriculture with those of industry and the armed forces.

Although handicapped by limited personnel and offices and other obstacles, the Farm Placement Service of the U. S. Employment Service has made considerable progress in meeting farmers' needs for workers. Farmers have gone to it more frequently with their needs, and have secured qualified workers, as indicated by the record of agricultural placements—1,566,012 in 1940 and 2,024,395 in 1941.

In order to best serve agriculture, the Farm Placement Service must have the cooperation of the Department of Agriculture, its constituent agencies, and farmers.

Field representatives of the Department, working through the USDA War Boards, should take steps to cooperate with the local employment exchanges of the Service. Department representatives can help work out the needed information on crop acreages, yields, planting and harvesting demands, and so forth. Much of this information is readily

available in the county or State offices of agricultural agencies. Similar cooperation is needed to meet problems of transportation, housing, and training.

Farmers should be informed of the services that the employment exchange can render. This calls for

cooperation and organization all the way down to each community, neighborhood, and farm. In the last analysis, success or failure of the Employment Service in fulfilling the labor exchange function depends upon complete understanding at the grass roots.



Books

EMPLOYER'S ASSOCIATIONS AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING IN CALIFORNIA:
PART III, THE DISADVANTAGED STATUS OF UNORGANIZED LABOR IN
CALIFORNIA'S INDUSTRIALIZED AGRICULTURE. Senate Report No. 1150,
Part III, 77th Congress, 2nd Session. Washington. 253 pages.

by OTIS E. MULLIKEN

PART III of the report of the Senate Committee on Education and Labor is prosaically entitled *The Disadvantaged Status of Unorganized Labor in California's Industrialized Agriculture*. It is divided into three main sections, likewise prosaically entitled "A Summary Analysis of the Sources of California's Agricultural Labor Problem," "The Historical Background of California Agriculture and Its Labor Problem," and "Employment Relations in California Agriculture 1930-40."

Behind these ponderous phrases is a reference book for everything worthwhile that has yet been written on California farm labor, and a careful presentation of nearly all basic data pertinent to the problem.

To speak of "the problem" may be misleading, for the problems are myriad. To the credit of the report, this is clearly recognized. A careful effort has been made to por-

tray the economic, social, and political factors which underlie "the disadvantaged status of unorganized labor in California's industrialized agriculture." Nor is the complex of relations subject merely to description. Interpretation and analysis are offered, although the analysis is sometimes disappointingly sketchy.

Of the three parts of its total report which have been issued to date by the Senate Committee on Education and Labor, Part III alone is of special interest to agricultural readers. Part IV dealing with employer's associations and their labor policies in California's industrialized agriculture, Part V on the organization of resistance to collective bargaining in California from 1935-39, and Part VIII on the Associated Farmers of California will be eagerly awaited. Meantime, Part III itself affords the serious reader many foot-

note references to material available in 75 volumes of testimony and exhibits published by the Committee.

SUBJECT of the current report is California in general and one segment of California in specific—"industrialized agriculture." But as the report points out, the basic elements of the system described apply equally well to other areas of agricultural employment.

Those with preconceived views regarding the social and economic structure of American agriculture should not be deterred from reading this report because of its emphasis on "industrialized agriculture." Nor should these same persons and others allow themselves to be alienated by the prevailing emphasis on collective bargaining. True, the report assumes and argues a new kind of social determinism—collective bargaining determinism. But whether you accept or reject it, the concept and its application is thought provoking.

The underlying importance of collective bargaining is expressed succinctly in the report as follows:

"Employee organization and collective bargaining are more than a means of promoting industrial peace and avoiding strikes. The right of workers to associate themselves together in a lawful effort to better their economic, social, and political status is more than an abstract civil liberty. It has a fundamental bearing upon the economic, social, and political welfare of the people to whom the right is confided by our institutions of law and government. It is by the exercise of that civil right that the workers disadvantaged status may be corrected and their relationship with their employers and

the agencies of Government adjusted to provide better opportunities for a living."

The report is by no means, however, a manual for the organization of agricultural workers, although the history of organizing efforts is given in several chapters. It looks beneath the sporadic and unsuccessful attempts to organize agricultural workers and the spectacular and frequently violent conflicts between employers and employees to the fundamental problems of agricultural labor.

THUS we have a valuable summary of the historical background of California agriculture and its labor problem. The characteristics of the agricultural labor market are thoroughly examined. And the problems caused by the seasonal, intermittent and shifting demand for labor are analyzed, though perhaps too much optimism is expressed regarding the potentialities of decasualization.

Thus, too, the report contains interesting data on wage rates, earnings, and employment. The validity of the frequently-heard contention of California farmers that they pay the highest agricultural wages in this country is examined. There is a brief and inconclusive discussion of the ability of farmers to pay higher wages, followed by a significant description of unilateral wage determination.

The presentation of the problems of agricultural workers with respect to housing, health, and education do not make pleasant reading. How few factual descriptions of the social and economic plight of our agricultural workers do! In the words of the report, "Agricultural

labor in California is not an occupation; it is an auxiliary to a system of public poor relief and a necessary evil for the operation of a great industry."

The relief problem occasioned by the economic status of the workers is described, but the limitations of public aid in the solution of the problems are recognized. To quote the report again, "The extension of public aids to agricultural workers must be viewed as a temporary palliative rather than a permanent cure."

THE REPORT offers 12 recommendations which are not developed completely, but are slated to be discussed in greater detail in Part X of the larger report.

In the words of the Committee, "The first and fundamental public policy which the Committee recommends is the enactment of such legislation as is necessary to protect the rights of agricultural labor in California to organize and bargain collectively."

The second recommendation is the enactment of such legislation as will achieve a decasualization, organization, and protection of the California agricultural labor market under public auspices. The third recommendation is a corollary of the second—the enactment of legislation designed to bring about more effective public regulation of private recruiting of agricultural labor, inter-State and intra-State.

The amendment of existing laws regulating child labor is recommended, as is also the passage of such amendments to social security legislation as will bring both old age and unemployment benefits to agricultural labor.

Other recommendations endorse the extension of minimum wage and maximum hour laws to cover agricultural labor; the establishment by law of a democratic procedure for determining fair wages; the extension of the work of the Agricultural Workers Health and Medical Association in California through the increased appropriation of Federal funds; and the amendment of the State workmen's compensation law in order to treat workers in industrialized agriculture the same as nonagricultural workers.

Still other recommendations relate to housing, the development of a national program of "full employment," and a program of rural resettlement.

CONCLUSION of the report points toward the basic need for "the adjustment of the industrialized employer-employee relationship in agriculture to the discipline of industrial democracy." This would involve collective bargaining and the protection of labor's civil rights. Perhaps more significant than this somewhat circumscribed solution is the report's recognition of the fundamental nature of the problem—its significance for the present and its portent for the future.

The final statements pose some basic issues warranting serious consideration by all those interested in agriculture and the welfare of agricultural workers:

"This Committee has reached the definite conviction that it is the present responsibility of our Government, Federal, State, and local to make democracy work in California's industrialized agriculture . . . In the midst of a vast international effort to defend democratic institu-

tions, the Nation cannot ignore the plight of those within our own borders who are outside the pale of economic democracy . . . Our democracy must embark upon the job of making the adjustments that are necessary when men who work and live on the land become largely

separated from rights of property in it . . ."

Stated broadly the issue is "whether or not this Nation will continue to countenance standards for labor in agricultural industry vastly inferior to those established for labor in other industries."

BACKGROUNDS OF THE WAR FARM LABOR PROBLEM. U. S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics and Farm Security Administration. Washington. 183 pages.

by ARTHUR M. ROSS

"THE LIVING quarters for these people are known as 'dug-outs', about three feet in the ground . . . bunks were arranged in tiers and approximately 100 people were housed in each 'dugout' . . . These people were piled up like hogs in these places throughout the winter; having no transportation facilities, they could not get away and the pay received was spent for food."

This was in Texas. In California, "We found filth, squalor, an entire absence of sanitation, and a crowding of human beings into totally inadequate tents or crude structures built of boards, weeds, and anything that was found at hand to give a pitiful semblance of a home at its worst."

Three thousand miles away, in New Jersey, "Crude barracks designed to house 10 to 30 families are provided. These barracks offer only a minimum of shelter with no comfort or conveniences. None of those observed had any bathing or laundry facilities. A common kitchen is provided but is usually inadequate, and cooking is done over open fires

or on kerosene stoves brought by the workers."

CONDITIONS like these caused *Backgrounds of the War Farm Labor Problem* to be written. Ten years ago it could not have been written. Aside from the work of such pioneers as Carleton Parker, Paul S. Taylor, and Don Lescohier, we knew little about agricultural labor. When we thought of him at all, we were apt to think of the hired hand as working only temporarily for wages, until he could acquire enough experience and capital to go into farming for himself. Farm workers were given little attention in the activities of government, and were ignored altogether in every law designed to augment the security and improve the conditions of the working population.

But the wretchedness in which seasonal agricultural workers lived in every part of the country during the depression could not be ignored. Picket lines in the Ohio onion fields, share-cropper riots in Arkansas, tear gas and vigilante squads in Cal-

ifornia all gave evidence that our bucolic conception of the hired man on the family-type farm no longer served as an adequate description, but only as contrast, to the bitter reality facing many wage workers on the land. After a shocked American discovered the "Okies" in 1938, two Congressional committees held months of hearings and published some fifty volumes on the agricultural labor problem.

The increasing knowledge which has followed our awakening has come in several phases; all of these are covered in *Backgrounds of the War Farm Labor Problem*, although some more adequately than others.

FIRST, there are the many detailed field studies of farm laborers—their incomes, housing, medical and educational problems, sociological attributes, and so forth. This report brings together in one place the results of numerous investigations made by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, the Farm Security Administration, the Agricultural Experiment Stations, the Works Progress Administration, the Tolan Committee, the International Labor Office, and the very few university economists such as Paul S. Taylor and John D. Black who have clearly seen the need for more and better information about farm labor. Comprehensively summarized, these studies show that miserable living standards and second-class citizenship are found not only in a few far-off California valleys, but in every part of the nation.

Second, more and more students of the problem have come to realize that employment relationships in agriculture have become widely industrialized, and that the typical wage-

earner on the farm suffers the same insecurity and the same weakness in bargaining power as the factory worker experienced before gaining the protection of labor unions and social legislation. On this point, the report might well have emphasized more strongly that most small farmers hire no wage labor, and that the small minority of larger farms hires a high proportion of all the workers. These facts are shown, but are hidden in a section called "Geographic Distribution."

Also deserving of more attention is the extent to which agricultural production has become interwoven with processing and marketing through the ties of financial dependency, control of market outlets, and common ownership, and even through organic integration within the same enterprise. The change in the labor relationship on the land is most apparent in the case of the many field workers who are no longer employed by farmers, but by canners, fruit and vegetable packers, sugar millers and refiners, cooperative marketing and processing associations. Reports of the LaFollette Committee and Federal Trade Commission indicate a clear-cut trend toward integration of some of the most important labor-using operations with the subsequent processing and marketing of the commodity.

THIRD, recent years have seen the beginning of a systematic analysis of the agricultural labor market in terms of the concepts and categories of labor economics, and especially in terms of Beveridge's theory of casual employment. The description of hiring practices in *Backgrounds of the War Farm Labor Problem* is good; but the analy-

sis of underemployment lays too much stress on the rain, the wind, and the change of the seasons, and too little on the extreme inefficiency with which the labor market is managed.

Fourth and last, it is now widely recognized that action is overdue—that the labor market must be decasualized, the rights of association protected, the risk of indigency in old age provided for, the wages regulated. Here the book is weak; it suffers gravely by comparison with recent reports of the LaFollette Committee and with many statements by scholars and Government officials.

In describing the disabilities of farm labor, the report is excellent, certainly the best ever produced on the subject by the Department of Agriculture. But these disabilities have become well known during the past few years. We know so much and have done so little. The time has come when the value of another report must rest primarily on its contribution toward a real program of action.

Such a contribution is not conspicuous in this report. A list of "Recommendations for Action" is introduced in the following manner: "A large number of proposals have been advanced to improve the status and living and working conditions of farm labor. These proposals have been set forth at various times by various people to meet different aspects of the problem . . . they are set forth to indicate possible directions of endeavor in the field of farm labor reform."

The list turns out to be suggestions which have been made by other people and which are rehearsed

without approval, disapproval, or comment. Later on in the chapter, it is stated that wage regulation, extension of social security legislation, rationalization of employment, and more FSA camps "seem worthy of immediate consideration."

This is scarcely all one might have hoped for. Reform of the agricultural labor market is not only "worthy of consideration." It is a wartime necessity.

TO BE SURE, the introduction states that: "There is a very real and tangible connection between what happened in the field of farm labor a few years ago and what is happening today . . . To stabilize the needed hired labor force may require positive action based on knowledge of the farm labor situation over a period of years." Unfortunately, these statements are not followed up in the text nor reflected in the language with which a program of action is discussed.

The fact is that the war farm labor problem is merely the converse side of the depression farm labor problem.

Low wage rates, miserable housing, and denial of bargaining rights epitomize depression conditions which inspired reports like *Background of the War Farm Labor Problem*. They epitomize equally well the reasons why a shortage of agricultural workers is probable in 1943 or 1944. Humanitarian motives for improving these conditions are now supplemented by the urgency of the food-for-victory program.

NOTES FROM ENGLAND

(Herewith the first in a series of letters to be published in LAND POLICY REVIEW from Douglas Cockerell, a bookbinder living in Letchworth, about 30 miles from London, to his brother, Theodore D. A. Cockerell, professor emeritus of zoology at the University of Colorado and research associate at the University of California Citrus Station.)

Nearly everyone, men and women, is now working at some sort of war work, voluntary or paid, and on the whole we are a happy lot. Some get over tired with long hours in the factories, and some are only able to work part time. Some are being trained for skilled or semiskilled work, and some go into factories untrained and do such things as checking and packing, or work in canteens. A 52-hour week is gradually getting established and has been found to be the maximum that an average worker can stand without exhaustion.

In Letchworth this week there is a drive to get more women into munition making, whole time or part time. It seems that the government has power to conscript women for factory work, but it still hopes to get women to volunteer. Many of the younger women prefer to go into the auxiliary services of the forces. They get a uniform and a good deal of companionship, and probably greater variety of work than in factories.

A great deal has been done in many factories to make conditions for the workers better than they have been, but there is still a good deal of the old "drive" tradition surviving. Teaching a job is apt to be perfunctory if left to an over busy foreman or forewoman, who very likely has little idea of how to teach. Now that many well educated women are going into factories there are new influences at work, and the net result may lead to permanent improvements.

Educated men and women naturally won't put up with the bullying ways of some foremen and forewomen, and already I have heard of great changes for the better, made to keep the workers. There is still a long way to go, but the mixing up of the classes will I hope lead to social changes and a mutual understanding of their varying points of view and difficulties. Never before have all classes in England been so mixed up, both at work and in billets.

We are told that the meat ration, amounting to about one pound per person each week, may have to be reduced. This will be a hardship to many people who do not consider that they have been fed unless they get a lot of meat. For us the present ration is ample, and we shall not mind its being reduced. Very many workers get good meals at the work canteens or British restaurants free of coupons.

The recent budget announced higher taxes on tobacco, beer, and wines, and higher purchase taxes on luxury clothes, silk dresses and fur coats for instance. Cosmetics are also to be highly taxed. None of these taxes will trouble us greatly. The income tax still stands at 50 percent, so all dividends are reduced to half before you get them. There are allowances in some cases that reduce the tax for the lower incomes and for people with small children or invalids to support. There is a good deal of trouble about collecting income tax from weekly wage earners. Some readjustments are to be made.

*In spite of the hardships of many individual families this year
I think that the real crisis in farm labor will begin next year.*

—CLAUDE R. WICKARD

year

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